



# A CURRICULAR PLAN FOR The Reading Workshop



LUCY CALKINS AND COLLEAGUES FROM  
THE READING AND WRITING PROJECT



A CURRICULAR PLAN FOR  
**The Reading Workshop**  
**Grade 2**

Common Core Reading and Writing Workshop

Lucy Calkins  
*and Colleagues from*  
*The Reading and Writing Project*



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# Overview of the Year for Second-Grade Readers

SEPTEMBER	UNIT 1: Taking Charge of Reading
OCTOBER	UNIT 2: Tackling Trouble: Assessment-Based Small-Group Work
NOVEMBER	UNIT 3: Characters Face Bigger Challenges—and So Do Readers
DECEMBER	UNIT 4: Reading Nonfiction, Reading the World
JANUARY/FEBRUARY	UNIT 5: Series Reading and Cross-Genre Reading Clubs
FEBRUARY/MARCH	UNIT 6: Nonfiction Reading Clubs
APRIL/MAY	UNIT 7: Reading and Role Playing: Fiction, Folktales, and Fairy Tales
MAY/JUNE	UNIT 8: Readers Can Read about Science Topics to Become Experts

How happy we are to share the 2011–2012 curricular calendar with you. Those of you who receive new calendars every year may glance at this quickly and notice that in many ways it is similar to last year's. It is true that we've tried to maintain most of the same units, but crucial changes are woven throughout.

This curricular calendar has been designed for second-grade teachers and is aligned with the new Common Core State Standards. We have also taken into account benchmark reading levels for second grade. You can find the TCRWP's Benchmarks for Independent Reading Levels chart on our website, [www.readingandwritingproject.com](http://www.readingandwritingproject.com). This chart has been developed based on data that we have collected over the years. To

determine these levels, we queried New York City schools, researched what other states were doing, learned the levels of passages used in New York State's ELA exams, distributed tentative recommendations, received feedback, and finally settled on some expectations. We acknowledge from the start, however, that they are open to debate. Therefore, we are not necessarily advocating that a district adopt levels we propose.

You'll notice that this year we include the reading benchmarks at the top of each unit. These include the months when you may be formally assessing your students (September, November, March, and June), as well as approximate levels for interim months. The purpose is to give you a sense of how children will ideally progress across the entire year so that you can help pace your students. Please note that this is just a suggested path; it will not hold true for all children. You may find it helps to refer to these month-by-month benchmarks as you create your own big goals for each unit.

We've written this curricular plan imagining that your classroom contains a wide array of readers, as second-grade classrooms generally do. We also assume that many of your children will enter your class reading books that are somewhere around levels I–J or above. The calendar is designed with an eye toward helping your readers progress in a way that, by the end of the year, they'll be in the proximity of levels M–N or above. If the majority of your readers enter second grade reading closer to levels D–G, it will be especially important for you to draw on this curricular calendar, as well as the units of the first-grade reading calendar presented in the spring. Then again, if many of your readers enter second grade reading books like the Magic Treehouse series (level M), you'll probably want to look at the third-grade curricular calendar for the way each of the units described here looks when it supports readers who are working at that level.

Reading instruction happens moment to moment in the classroom as teachers establish the conditions in which children learn to read (and to write), assess what children can do, and then teach children to take one step and then subsequent steps forward as readers. Starting in kindergarten and continuing through higher education, teaching is always responsive; it is always assessment-based. But this doesn't mean that teachers cannot imagine, beforehand, how the classroom work will probably evolve across the year.

As readers grow, their needs change fairly dramatically—and our kids don't all grow in sync! It's as though one teacher needs to support a first-, second-, and even third-grade curriculum simultaneously. Then too, readers always need to integrate sources of meaning, so when you teach a unit of study that focuses on one aspect of reading (say, word attack strategies) you always need to say to children, "Don't forget the topic we're *not* focusing on right now—you need to be thinking about your characters, too!" In this curricular calendar, we discuss ways in which you can use components of balanced literacy to be sure that children progress in all aspects of reading. If the unit of study is on comprehension, for example, you might use shared reading or interactive writing to remind children to use their word attack strategies.



This curricular calendar was written with input from teachers, literacy coaches, staff developers, and reading experts. We offer it as one informed pathway for your upcoming year, in hopes that as a learning community we can be doing congruent work as the upcoming year unfolds. However, we are under no illusions, and we know that there are hundreds of ways you could plan your curricular calendar for the upcoming year. We expect that all of you, as second-grade teachers, work with grade level colleagues to determine your school's own curricular calendar for second grade. Yours may differ somewhat from this one as you consider your own areas of expertise, your students' needs and interests, the standards and assessments to which you and your children are held accountable, the span of reading levels in your classroom, and your school's larger curricular plans. We hope that you produce a written document representing your own curricular calendar—that you write some of your own descriptions of units or bring some units from last year's calendar into this one. Above all, we strongly recommend that you and your colleagues agree on a shared journey, one in which you will be able to support one another.

## **New Work for the Coming Year**

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You will see that we have added some new units to the second-grade calendar and have also made some substantial revisions to units we've carried over from last year. Another important change is that we decided to reduce the number of units from ten to eight. Our rationale for this was that in the past, teachers have felt rushed. Having two fewer units will allow you to spend more time on units you feel will especially benefit your students. In this overview we suggest a possible progression through the units, with the final four spanning longer than a month. You may decide to structure your units in other ways. Always, our intent is that teachers will adapt this curriculum in ways that benefit their particular classroom.

The Common Core State Standards emphasize that children should spend large portions of time reading and writing nonfiction. The second-grade curriculum includes three nonfiction units. This year, we revised these three units to feature new areas and angles. During these units, students will use their growing repertoire of reading skills to read just-right nonfiction texts. The third nonfiction unit—Readers Can Read about Science to Become Experts—spotlights reading about physical science (in second grade, the focus is force and motion). Of course, in addition, you will expect that throughout the year children read just-right books of increasing difficulty on a variety of science and social studies themes. We want to encourage our students to be researchers of the world and to know that reading can be a source of information to grow knowledge both about subjects they are experts in and ones that are newer to them. We have also added a section on reading across genres to the series reading club unit, which will allow second graders to read yet more informational text.

Finally, we have combined dramatization with fairy tales and folktales this year to highlight their natural partnership. While many units focus on a particular genre—fiction, science, and so on—some are designed to allow children to read more broadly, across genres. This calendar aims to give children a well-balanced reading curriculum in second grade and to prepare them for the work ahead in third grade.

## Reading Workshop

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The structure your reading workshop will follow day to day will stay the same, even when the unit changes from month to month and grade to grade. For example, every day in your reading workshop, you'll provide direct and explicit instruction through a brief minilesson; you'll provide children with long stretches of time to read just-right books (and sometimes to read books that are a tiny bit challenging); and you'll provide individuals with assessment-based conferences and coaching. Most of your children will enter the year reading level J books, so they should be reading silently the majority of the time, then meeting with a partner at the end of the reading workshop (and perhaps in the middle of it) to talk about their books, just as fifth graders do. Some of your children will not yet be reading level J books, and their partnership work will look more like that in first-grade classrooms, with partners spending some time each day sitting hip-to-hip, one copy of a book between them, reading aloud in unison or taking turns. You'll also convene small groups within the reading workshop. Some schools provide additional time for small groups outside the workshop—this is most apt to be the case for strugglers.

Minilessons generally start the day's reading workshop; this is an important way to rally and instruct children toward an essential skill pertaining to your entire community of learners. For example, you might teach all your students that it is important to test whether a book feels "just right." You'll want to teach your learners to orient themselves to a book before diving in, to generate predictions for the kind of text it is and how it is apt to go. You'll want to teach your kids all about ways of working with partners, how to organize a reading life, tackling tricky words, monitoring for sense, using fix-up strategies when sense falls apart, jotting in response to reading, and so forth. Minilessons revolve around a clear teaching point that crystallizes the message of a lesson. For example, a teaching point might go like this: "Today I want to teach you that readers don't just open a book and start reading! Instead, readers take time to orient ourselves to the book and think, 'So what kind of book is this?' When we figure out what kind of book it is, we have an idea about how it will probably go."

Each minilesson is designed to teach your readers a skill they can draw on that day and any day—not to assign children a particular bit of work one day and another bit of work another day. It is a misunderstanding of workshop teaching when a teaching point is worded, "Today we *will*," or "Today you *should*." Because the goal is for readers to accrue a repertoire of strategies they will use over and over, it helps to create



and post a chart of abbreviated teaching points so that readers can review what they have learned from prior minilessons. You can then bring these anchor charts from one unit of study to subsequent ones. Always, it is essential that you make these charts fresh each year within the presence of new learners.

The most important part of a reading workshop is the time spent reading. Children disperse after the minilesson, book bins or baggies in hand, and find a spot to read. At the start of the year, you may need to remind children of routines and expectations for independent reading versus whole-class or partner reading. Then, too, children's stamina for maintaining reading may be a bit low early on in the year. Many teachers find it helpful to chart their students' stamina across the first month of the year, evaluating their progress. The length of independent reading time will grow as children's skills grow. It may be that because children's stamina is not strong at the start of the year, you may suggest that all children read alone for twenty or twenty-five minutes, then sit hip-to-hip and read aloud together in partnerships for five or ten more minutes. You will have to gauge what your students are ready and able to do. But by the time September is over, you should have coached readers who are reading level J books or above to read for an entire thirty-minute period, talking but not reading with partners for about five minutes at the end. By February, reading workshops are close to sixty minutes, with at least forty-five minutes reserved for reading independently. Keep this in mind as you set goals with your class.

In any case, while children are reading by themselves they will use Post-its to indicate places they are dying to talk about: funny parts, important pages, places where they grew a big idea or learned something surprising. They'll later share those places with partners. Across the year, you will want to vary configurations so children sometimes meet with just one partner and sometimes meet in clubs comprising foursomes.

As you progress in and out of units of study, you will channel kids' reading so that, for specific chunks of time, they are reading one kind of text. They'll always read books at the text level you've assessed as just-right (as well as at easier levels). Usually, children select ten or twelve books a week to store in their book bin, reading these books several times. They swap bins midweek with a same-level partner, doubling the number of books they read during the week.

Although some children will move quickly and seamlessly from one level to the next, the majority of your students will progress more gradually. During the transition from one level to the next, they will begin to read books at the higher level, probably with some scaffolding, but will still feel mostly at ease in their current level. You'll give your students what we call *transitional book baggies*—baggies that include mostly titles at the child's just-right level as well as a few books at the next one. The latter might be books you've shared with the child through a book introduction or during guided reading, or titles that the child has read with his or her partner. The idea is to scaffold transitional readers as they move into a new level.

As children read, you'll be conferring with individual students in addition to leading small groups. You'll also sometimes just give book introductions—especially to help children who are relatively new to a level or series. Your reading conferences may follow the research-compliment-teach structure of many writing conferences. Otherwise, you'll coach children's reading. Reading Recovery teachers are expert at the latter, so learn from them! Some small groups will need help with fluency and integrating sources of information, so you might decide to do a bit of shared reading. Some small groups will need help holding tight to meaning while also considering multisyllabic words—you might do a strategy lesson with them. Some small groups may need support moving to the next level with book introductions, and you might do guided reading with them. Your small-group instruction needs to be flexible, need-based, and quick, lasting no more than ten or twelve minutes.

## Additional Components of Balanced Literacy

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A full, balanced reading program includes not only a reading workshop but also a variety of other structures. Some of the most important for early elementary school children are reading aloud, shared reading, phonics (also referred to as *word study*), and writing workshop.

Once children are in second grade, the reading workshop lasts almost an hour every day. In addition, you'll want to read aloud every day. At least a few times a week, you'll support conversations about the read-aloud book. You will also need to lead a writing workshop, which, like the reading workshop, will last approximately an hour a day. Second graders still have a lot to learn about spelling and phonics, so it will be important for you to lead word study every day. In addition, you'll draw on the other components of balanced literacy, weaving them into your social studies and science work; morning meetings; and additional small-group work, shared reading, and interactive writing.

### *Reading Aloud*

One cannot stress enough the importance of reading aloud. You will want to read aloud to teach children discipline-based concepts that are integral to social studies and science. You'll also read aloud to create a sense of community and to show children why people love to read. And you'll read aloud to teach children vocabulary and higher-level comprehension skills. As you conduct a read-aloud session be sure that it includes opportunities for accountable talk.

To do this, plan the read-aloud to demonstrate a skill or a collection of skills. For example, you may decide to support your students' effort to understand expository nonfiction text by teaching them to approach the text thinking, "What is this mostly about?" After reading just a bit, pause and in your mind create a subtitle for the text

you've read so far. Then read on, revising that initial subtitle (and with it, your sense of what the text is mostly about). To use the read-aloud text as a forum for teaching reading skills, place Post-its in the text ahead of time, marking places where you'll either think aloud to model a reading strategy or ask students to do similar work together by jotting down their thoughts or turning to talk to a partner about their ideas. Your prompts for getting children to turn and talk could be something like, "Turn and tell your neighbor what you think this is mostly about—it's like writing a subtitle in the air," or "Turn and tell your partner what you think will happen next," or "Let's think about what's going on here. Turn and tell your neighbor about what you think is happening in this part." After a one- or two-minute interlude during which partners externalize their thoughts (that is, talk), you'll read on, not wanting to lose the thread of the text.

After pausing several times while reading the chapter or the section of the text either to demonstrate or to provide children with guided practice doing what you have demonstrated, you'll probably want to have a whole-class conversation. These longer conversations will probably happen at least twice a week. During these conversations, it is important for children to direct their comments to one another and for one child to respond to what another has said. That is, these conversations are not occasions for you to pepper the class with questions, calling on one child and then another. Instead, class members might talk back and forth about a general question—whether Poppleton is really a good friend, for example—saying things like, "I want to add on to what you said," or "Another example of that is \_\_\_\_\_," or "But I'm not sure you're right because \_\_\_\_\_."

You may wonder, "Should I use the same partnerships to support both independent reading [ability-matched partners read the same books] and reading aloud?" This is a question only you can answer. It is organizationally easier for children to maintain the same partnerships for both independent reading and read-alouds, but it is educationally preferable that read-aloud partnerships not always be ability-based. In fact, some teachers call one partner Partner A (or Partner One) and the other Partner B (or Partner Two) and quietly group students so that the A (or One) partners are the stronger readers and talkers. Then, when you set children up to do challenging work, you can say, "Partner A [One] will you tell Partner B [Two] \_\_\_\_\_"; if the task is one you believe is perfect for Partner B [Two], just reverse it.

As mentioned earlier, you need not rely only on the prompt for partners to turn and talk during a read-aloud. You may also have children stop and jot or stop and sketch. If children are jotting or sketching, stop reading and give them a few moments to record their ideas—if you continue to read, many second graders are apt to miss large chunks of the story.

Your read-aloud work will sometimes foreshadow work that the whole class will be doing soon. That is, if your class will soon begin a unit on nonfiction reading, you may want to get a head start by reading nonfiction aloud during the last week of the previous unit. By the time your children embark on their independent work, they will already have a common resource to draw on.

## Shared Reading

Shared reading is that time in the day when teachers and children have their eyes on one text—usually a big book or a song or other text written in large print on chart paper—reading in sync with one another while the teacher points underneath the words. Usually a classroom community spends some time rereading familiar texts and some (usually less) time working together with a new text.

In classrooms with a large number of students reading level J or K texts, many teachers begin the year with daily shared reading (often no more than ten minutes), working on fluency and practicing the print strategies they've determined many of their students still need to internalize to use them on the run as they read. Additionally, the act of gathering all students around a text in the beginning of the year helps build community and inspires enthusiasm for reading.

As your readers progress, you may focus more on fluency, phrasing, and prosody, as well as difficult vocabulary. You may also use whole-class shared reading to provide comprehension instruction, coaching readers to envision, infer, and synthesize.

Shared reading is particularly helpful when working with students who are English language learners (ELLs) or who need continued support with fluency. We'll discuss fluency throughout this calendar, because transitional readers must make a gigantic jump in fluency and there are lots of strategies for helping children do so.

## Word Study

A school needs to decide on an approach to phonics. The TCRWP does not try to make this decision for a school. Most schools that we work with draw on a combination of *Words Their Way*, *Phonics Lessons* (the Fountas and Pinnell series), and Pat Cunningham's work.

The reading units of study should not replace the work you will do to grow students' knowledge of phonological awareness and phonics. The purpose of word study is to build students' knowledge of high-frequency words and word features to help children become efficient problem solvers of words in reading and writing. You will want to devote fifteen or twenty minutes each day to explicit, direct phonics instruction. Assess your students' knowledge to determine which features you will focus on. Most teachers use the *Words Their Way* spelling inventory and word identification task to determine their students' stages of spelling development. Once you have assessed your students, you will want to provide whole-group or small-group instruction. If you feel small-group work is daunting you'll probably choose to work with the whole class. If so, focus on what most students are ready to learn next. Choose features to work on that most students are confusing. For example, if you notice that many students are spelling *ee* words with *ea*, you'll want to work on long vowel patterns. If you do decide to divide your class into groups for word study, you'll want to begin by teaching students the routines to several word study activities so

that the rest of the students can work in partnerships as you are working with a group. Once you have assessed your students and decided how to present your instruction, you will want to follow whatever phonics curriculum you have selected. Be sure you spend enough time studying each feature (blends, spelling patterns, and so on) in a variety of ways. Make sure you are supporting students' ability to read and write these features both in isolation and in context. Always provide explicit phonics teaching as part of your day. In some units, you will notice that there is an emphasis on word solving. During these units in particular, you will want to support children's transfer of their word knowledge into their reading.

### *Small-Group Instruction*

It is critically important that you lead small-group instruction as often as you can. When you think about small-group work, start with the idea that any teaching you do with the whole class can also be done in a small group. You can do small-group shared reading, small-group interactive writing, small-group phonics, small-group read-aloud/accountable talk, and so forth. Your small-group work can be used to preteach, reteach, or enrich. As an example of preteaching, if you are reading aloud a chapter book and notice that five or six children are not joining in the accountable talk, you may want to gather them together before you read the next section and engage them in a very active book talk, so that when they listen to the section with the rest of the class they will be able to talk about ideas you have already sanctioned and thus take a more active role in the whole-class discussion.

Your small-group work will be shaped especially by your assessments. For example, if you have some children whose writing is hard to read or who do not yet use short vowels correctly, you will want to give these students extra help. This extra help needs to begin with extra assessments. How many words do they know on sight? Do they know all of their letters and sounds? Once you've determined the level of work at which these children can be successful, you might look back in these calendars to be reminded of the sort of instruction they will need. That instruction will need to be given intensely over the first six weeks of the year, and you will need to determine whether these children are making rapid progress. Those who are not will need to work not only with you but also with a specialist. That is, those children who enter second grade as early beginning readers and who do not progress very rapidly when given high-quality classroom instruction will need specialized supports.

The instruction this group receives will be multifaceted. They'll need, first and foremost, to read books they can read with 96% accuracy. Book introductions will help them with these books. They will need phonics support that is tailored to their level, which could mean work with the alphabet but will probably mean work with short vowels (like the short *a*) and with simple CVC words such as *rat* and *sat*. In small groups, these children can do the kind of picture sorts and word hunts that are recommended in *Words Their Way*, for example. For these readers you will also need

to emphasize creating their own writing, hearing all the sounds in words as they write, rereading their writing, finding the short vowel words and fixing them up, and writing more and more often. And you will want to move these children up from one level of text to another as soon as you can, relying on guided reading as a way to prepare children for the characteristics of that harder level of text. That is, in guided reading, much of your teaching will involve setting children up for the features of the new level, especially those that you believe will be challenging. For example, in a guided reading group for children who are moving into level E texts, you may set children up for text that wraps around.

Any children who come into your classroom reading level H or below may also need to receive special attention. If possible, meet more frequently with these readers, making sure they really can read their books with accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Book introductions can always help. Keep an eye on their volume of reading and their levels of engagement.

Throughout the year, you will pull children together for small-group instruction whenever you find several children who share the same needs as readers. For example, based on your assessments, you might decide that you have six children who need help orchestrating the sources of information and drawing on multiple strategies to deal with harder words and longer texts. In a small-group strategy lesson, you can build their “toolbox” of print strategies.

## Assessment

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The first assessment you will want to give your children at the start of second grade is the writing assessment, described in the writing curricular calendar. The TCRWP also recommends that every teacher give the spelling inventory that has been designed by Donald Bear and is foundational to his *Words Their Way* program. This can be given as a whole-class spelling test, so it is the quickest assessment you can deliver. You can consult Bear’s book *Words Their Way: Word Study for Vocabulary and Spelling Instruction* for more information on how to analyze this inventory. You’ll need to follow his directions for counting the number of correct features for each child (this will take longer than giving the test but still requires just minutes per child). Your calculations will quickly tell you whether a particular child is an early transitional reader (who will probably be reading H/I books and will need you to help him or her learn “within word” spelling patterns, such as those involving long vowels and silent *es*) or a beginning reader (who will be reading level E books, will need help with “late letter name stage” spelling features and patterns, and will benefit from support with digraphs and blends).

The spelling inventory can be a proxy informal reading inventory. It can, for a few days, take the place of each child reading aloud a leveled text while you take running records to quickly determine the level of books the child is able to read with ease.



You will still want to conduct running records soon, but before doing so, use the spelling inventory to learn about the range of readers in your class, identify those needing immediate extra supports starting on day one, match readers to books they are apt to handle with ease, and begin tailoring your whole-class instruction—your shared reading, read-alouds, minilessons, and so forth—to the readers in your care. You will also want to begin phonics instruction soon, and your spelling inventory (plus a copy of *Words Their Way* or another book on assessment-based phonics) can get you started.

Of course, you can also use children's last year's book levels and favorite books as a place to start. If teachers across the school are willing, it is ideal for each grade level to begin the year by borrowing a huge armload of familiar texts from the previous year—poems, big books, read-aloud picture books, and independent books. One of the most urgent things you can do is make up for the backsliding in reading ability that often occurs during the summer. If children have the chance to reread books they knew really well at the end of last year, which are preequipped with a book introduction, perhaps they will be able to regain lost ground by reading them. Don't fool yourself for a minute into thinking it will do children good to start this new year reading books that they cannot read with accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. That is, make sure they can read the books with 95% accuracy and can answer a couple of literal questions about them, as well as an inferential question.

A word about fluency. It is really important that children read books "like they're talking" and this involves reading with speed as well as with expression and phrasing. The one year in which children especially need to accelerate their fluency is second grade. Hasbrook and Tindle did a study of children at various grade levels and their fluency development. They found that second graders in the 50th achievement percentile tend to progress from reading fifty-three accurate words per minute (wpm) when reading new texts aloud to reading those texts at ninety-four words per minute. Second graders in the 75th achievement percentile typically go from reading aloud eighty-five accurate words per minute to reading 124 words per minute. The interesting thing is that children do not make this sort of a leap at any other grade. For example, those second graders in the 50th percentile will have increased their rate by forty-one words. In third grade, their rate will increase so that by the end of the year, third graders reading in the 50th percentile tend to read 114 words per minute—a 20 wpm increase. The next year, these same children's fluency only increases 10 wpm; fifth grade is just a bit more than that. This is a long-winded way of saying that second grade is the year you really need to watch over fluency, and one important part of this involves simply noting, at the start of the year, the number of accurate words per minute the child reads orally. Monitor this score and make sure that the score changes in ways that reflect progress as the year proceeds. (Adequate reading rates by grade are provided on the next page.) It's a big deal. We include ways to support this throughout the calendar and offer day-long calendar conferences to help you as well.

General Range of Adequate Reading Rates by Grade Level			
Grade	WPM	Grade	WPM
1	60–90	6	195–220
2	85–120	7	215–245
3	115–140	8	235–270
4	140–170	9	250–270
5	170–195	12	250–300

*Harris and Sipay (1990)*

Take note of the words your children can read on sight with automaticity. If your children are progressing well, they will enter second grade with a sight vocabulary of approximately 150 words. If your children’s sight vocabulary is in this vicinity, you may not need to focus much attention on tracking their sight-word growth at this point. That is, once children have a sight vocabulary of 150 words, as they progress up levels of books and read with increasing fluency, their sight vocabulary will tend to grow. But if you have students who do not have a sight vocabulary of roughly 150 words at this point, you’ll want to continue to teach and assess this dimension of reading growth. Give each of these children a key ring of word cards representing the sight words she or he knows or almost knows, so the child can flip through these cards during every reading workshop to, reading each aloud to herself or himself. Children may also use word wall words to play “I spy a word that \_\_\_\_\_” with partners, and certainly you may ask each child to take time each day to use the pointer and read aloud all the words on the word wall. (Some teachers try to jazz this up by having the child pull instructions from a can. One day the slip of paper will say, “Read the sight words in a witch’s voice,” and another day, “Read the sight words like you are a cat—meow each word.”) Do whatever you need to do to lure kids to develop automaticity in reading an increasing bank of sight words, and of course help children use these words as they read.

You’ll need to attend to your readers’ developing abilities to comprehend texts deeply. You’ll learn this best by listening closely during book talks, by hearing what children say to partners, and by listening to children’s retelling of the books they are reading independently. Although we do not have a scale with which to measure this, the truth is that there is little that is more important. You may want each child to keep a reading portfolio that includes artifacts that represent the child’s growing abilities to comprehend. For example, you may read aloud a short story and, at preset places in the text, ask the child to stop and jot a response to the prompt “What do you think will happen next?” You could date the child’s responses and keep them, plus the text, from September and from several subsequent months, perhaps also including a rubric that analyzes what that child does and does not do yet when asked to predict. Similar records could be kept for any other comprehension skill. We strongly suggest you

select a few skills and make a point of keeping this sort of record. There is a rule of thumb that says, “We inspect what we respect.”

It’s important also to plan for how you’ll continue to assess your students throughout the year. Many teachers institute a system for keeping track of children’s reading levels and growth (both individual and by class) and for moving readers along to more challenging texts when they are ready. That is, you may decide to devote the reading workshop on the 12th, 13th, and 14th day of each month to a consideration of whether children are ready to progress to new levels. In general, your children need to make rapid progress this year, at least moving to a higher level of text every other month (if not more often), so you need to watch vigilantly for and seize opportunities.

You will find that the TCRWP has assessment tools on our website, [www.readingandwritingproject.com](http://www.readingandwritingproject.com). There are two sets of leveled texts used for the primary levels, A–I. One is a set of multicultural books from the BeBop Books series, and one is a set of books from Scholastic. On the website there is information telling you how to order whichever set you select. For readers beyond level I, there are text passages that can be printed right from the website.

## Building and Refreshing Classroom Libraries

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Once your students have each been assessed and you’ve matched them to just-right books, you will want to be sure that they know where to get their just-right books in your classroom library. If you have lots of children reading levels H/I/J, for example, you will need lots of books at those levels. If you have no children reading levels O and P, there is little reason to have those books in your library at this time. Your library should reflect your readers. Students will need help, especially early in the year, as they learn to manage their independent book choices. You will establish a system for checking out and returning books that travel between home and school.

One of the key factors in making any unit of study successful is having a collection of excellent books that can be used as just-right books and as read-alouds. Through our work with students and educators across the country, we have begun developing lists of books to support particular units of study. Our website contains many book lists that support our reading units. The book lists include levels—Fountas and Pinnell’s levels when those exist, otherwise Scholastic’s levels. If neither source exists, we note the Lexile level, which you can convert to an approximation of Fountas and Pinnell levels (take them with a grain of salt, though). You may want to visit our website throughout the year for updated information.

As you well know as second-grade teachers, this is a transformative year for your students. They are ready to be more in control of their reading lives, to plan in more sophisticated ways, and to set loftier goals. It is a year of huge growth and a time for children to meet high expectations as they ready themselves for the demands of third grade. Enjoy this wonderful work with your energetic readers!



## UNIT ONE

# Taking Charge of Reading

### SEPTEMBER

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: I/J/K)

By the time you meet your second graders, they have been in reading workshops for two years—and they already know a few things. They know how to read alone, and they know routines for reading with partners. They know that reading involves using strategies at points of difficulty and above all that reading means making sense of the text. They know how to choose their just-right books. When second graders enter the room, then, it's important that you expect them to use everything they already know how to do. You will want to communicate urgency and enthusiasm, brush off the summer rustiness, and expect movement and growth during the month. Expect that in the interval between the first day of school and the last day of September, many of your children will already have progressed up a level, and they'll probably be progressing again in November.

This unit will help you get everything up and going all at once, while at the same time helping children feel as good as possible about themselves and about this new year. Although you want to say, "Let's get all the old stuff that you were doing last year going again," you also need to convey, "This year is going to be filled with excitement, full of new and amazing stuff—it's hard to believe how lucky we are to be traveling this path together!" At the same time that you are getting the reading workshop up and running and establishing a strong community, you'll also be conducting informal assessments to help children find books that are at their independent reading levels (their just-right books).

This unit is especially aligned with the fundamentals of the Common Core State Standards—to read with accuracy and fluency so that comprehension is the

main focus of the work the reader is doing. This unit addresses the Common Core State Standards' call for students to read grade level text with purpose and understanding. In this unit, students will be setting explicit goals for themselves that allow them to read with purpose, will be reminded of old strategies, and will be explicitly taught a few crucial new strategies to support understanding. Additionally, this unit spotlights reading with accuracy, appropriate rate and phrasing, and expression.

You'll begin the unit by reminding children that they need to develop habits as readers and that they need to read often. You may do this by communicating that since they are now second graders, they are no longer the littlest kids in the school. You could remind them of what they were like on the first day of kindergarten, when they wrote by drawing pictures and read by telling stories to go with the pictures. They've grown bigger now—their legs are longer and their muscles are stronger. Many of them don't even have baby teeth falling out any more! They are reading longer books with fewer pictures! They'll be third graders soon! You might tell them that this is the year they become big kids—this year they will take charge of their own reading. They'll have to set their own goals, they'll read for a really long time every single day, they'll have reading to do at home, and they'll have to make a lot of choices about what to read and how to read it on their own this year. They'll learn to be problem solvers and decision makers—not like little kids anymore, like second graders.

The next part of the unit reminds children to use a whole repertoire of strategies they already know from kindergarten and first grade for reading and thinking in the beginning, middle, and end of each book. You'll not only remind children of strategies they should be very familiar with (using the title and the cover to predict what the book will be about, for example), but you'll nudge them toward strategies that will support them in the early chapter books that most of them are now reading or will be reading very soon.

By the third part of the unit, you will have had a little more time to get to know your children. You'll be setting up long-term partnerships based on reading interests, personalities, the language needs of your ELLs, and the particular strengths and weaknesses of your students. You'll aim for every child to be partnered with someone he or she can learn something from, and you'll remind kids of all the great partner work they already have learned to do, angling their partner work toward the big-kid work of talking and thinking about books to grow new ideas and helping each other solve problems on their own without crying out for help from a grown-up.

Last year your students experienced work in first grade that helped address the Common Core State Standards' speaking and listening goals. This year, the children will build on what they learned last year. They will participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about second-grade topics and texts. They'll do this work often with peers during reading workshop, but also during read-aloud with accountable talk, with partners, and with larger groups, with and without adult support.

Specifically, this unit (and other units) will address the Common Core State Standards that call for second graders to be able to:

- Follow agreed-on rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.
- Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.

The unit will wrap up with repertoire lessons that crystallize what you've been teaching through the whole unit—that readers can be our own problem solvers. Readers are resourceful, using all the tricks, strategies, and tips we've ever been taught to keep going in our reading. Above all, we don't wait for someone to come along to tell us that we need to be reading—we find a great book, dive in, and read, read, read!

## Assessment

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We highly recommend that every child goes home over the summer with a bin or bag of books at their just-right (independent) reading level and brings them back on the first day of school. This way, every child has a bin or bag of books to read over the summer and they have books to read on the first day! You'll want to scan your list of levels and make some backup baskets or bags of books for children who forget to bring back their books, of course, but this is a fantastic way to help kids pick up right where they left off.

You can do some quick, informal assessments using books from your classroom library to do informal running records. You can use last year's June reading levels to estimate a child's current reading level, or you can ask the child to pick out a book that feels like it is just right and go from there. To assess informally, ask the child to read a hundred or so words from any book from the classroom library, knowing that four miscues will mean 96% accuracy, and any more miscues than that is an indication that the book is too hard. Take note: Does she read fluently, with expression and smooth phrasing? Can she retell the important parts of what she just read? These are imperfect tools, but they are quick, and will allow you to get your kids roughly matched with books they can read and understand—much more quickly than sitting down to do a formal running record with each child the first week of school, while you are still learning names and establishing a supportive environment, a learning community. The formal assessment can come later, when things have settled down, when children won't feel they are being tested on the first day of school.



During the first week of school, you'll want to pay special attention to readers who are well below grade level according to last year's information. While formal assessment can wait until later for most of your class so that you can focus on quickly matching kids with just-right books and getting to know them, you will want to get a jump start on the children you are most concerned about. Right away you'll not only want to take formal running records with your struggling readers but also assess their knowledge of high-frequency words, establish a spelling inventory, and evaluate their ability to match letters with sounds (unless you can be certain from first-grade records that the child has mastered this skill). All of these assessments are available on our website ([www.readingandwritingproject.com](http://www.readingandwritingproject.com)). The spelling inventory can also be found in the book *Words Their Way* (Bear et al. 2008), along with spelling and phonics lessons according to spelling stage. Ideally, you could draw on the support of a school reading specialist or literacy coach to help you administer these assessments and devise plans for each at-risk reader.

Volume and stamina will take center stage during this unit. You'll expect children to read for longer stretches than they did in first grade and read more pages, more books, and you'll provide lots of support in helping them do so.

## **Part One: Helping Children Make Decisions Based on Habits, Volume, and Stamina**

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On the first, second, and third days of second grade, you have a fantastic opportunity to set the tone for the rest of the year. You'll want to get your kids excited and energized about being second graders, while at the same time establishing a reading workshop in which kids are reading the entire time, a little bit longer each day. On the first day, you may want to say something like, "This year is the year you become the big kids of the school—you'll be learning how to make decisions about how your reading will go. This is a more grown-up year; *this* year you'll decide when a book is just right for you and how to get ready to read a book. So starting today it is up to you! You have baggies of books from last year ready to go and a basket of extra books on each table—choose books that *you* want to read. Choose how *you* will get ready to read each book. Will you read the title and the blurb on the back of the book? Will you read the first page more than once? Will you take a picture walk to see how the book is organized or to see what's going to happen or to remind yourself how the book goes if you've already read it? It is up to you!"

It is important that the beginning days of second grade energize your students and make them feel independent. Remember, the Common Core State Standards state that by the end of the year your children will read and comprehend stories and poetry in the grade 2–3 text-complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. They will need to read, read, read to get the practice they need to reach this level of text complexity. With that in mind, you'll want to do everything you can to make reading exciting and to instill in your students a sense of responsibility

for their own reading work. Then, as a mid-workshop teaching point on the first day, you might also say, “Each of you also has Post-its—and it is up to *you* to decide how to use them. Will you Post-it the places where the character seems to be changing? Will you mark the parts that make you laugh? Will you mark the places where you have questions? It is up to you!”

A big part of helping children make decisions for themselves will involve setting goals for the volume of reading they’ll be doing. By the time children enter your second-grade class, they should already be able to sustain reading for half an hour in school and an equal time at home. You’ll want to make sure your expectations for the amount of progress they’ll make during that time are tailored to the level of text the child can handle. For example, a child who reads at level J at 85 words per minute should be able to read the thousand-word *Fox in Love*, by James Marshall, in about twelve minutes! Of course, children will spend time looking at pictures, pausing briefly to think, or working on solving a tricky word.

Not every reader will read at the same rate, although there are helpful ranges to keep in mind. These ranges correlate to the types of fluency we expect (according to the NAEP fluency scale, the ability to read three- or four-word phrases, with appropriate intonation and preservation of the author’s syntax, is expected at levels J and above). Paying attention to reading rate is important, because it is one way to look at fluency. You also need to know each child’s rate to monitor volume: the rate has implications for the number of books a child needs to have in a baggie or bin for the week. See the chart below for advice on numbers of books and reading rate by level (reading rates come from *Developmental Reading Assessment*, Beaver and Carter 2006). Many second-grade teachers suggest that at least the readers who are reading texts at levels J and above begin keeping reading logs. These pages include space for the child to record the author, title, and level of each book read, the start and end pages, and start and end time. Children who are reading books below J might simply tally the number of books they’ve read and reread.

<b>How Long Should It Take a Child to Read a Book According to His or Her Reading Level?</b>				
<b>Title</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Approx # of Words</b>	<b>Reading Rate</b>	<b># of Minutes per Book</b>
<i>Henry and Mudge</i> (Rylant)	J	800–1000	100 wpm	10 minutes
<i>Horrible Harry</i> (Kline)	L	4,500	100 wpm 200 wpm	45 minutes 25 minutes
<i>Magic Tree House Series</i> (Osborne)	M	6,000	100 wpm 200 wpm	60 minutes 30 minutes

Once you have established that your second graders are in control of their own decisions as readers, you’ll want to teach them how to set goals for themselves by

using their reading logs. During reading conferences with children you could talk about the logs, asking such questions as:

- What do you notice about how many pages you tend to read at home?
- What do you notice about the number of pages (minutes) you tend to read at school? Why are these different, do you think?
- Do you notice times when reading was really good for you—what do you think made it so good? How could you get more times like that?
- Do you notice times when you didn't do much reading? What do you think caused those times?
- How do you think you could make a goal for yourself about how much you read based on what you see here?

To coach into children's reading rate, you can remind children not to point at each word as they read, because this will interfere with reading rate and expression. You could also remind children who read at G/H or above to read silently unless they encounter difficulty and to take their finger out of the book. If a child is reading a text that contains multiple lines of print and the child has trouble tracking, you will first want to be sure the text is not too difficult. If you are confident it is not too difficult and utterly convinced the child needs help tracking, show children how they could run their finger down the edge of the page for support. If this isn't enough support and children try to use a card or a piece of paper under the lines of print, teach them not to do that—this makes it hard for the child to see ahead, something that is absolutely necessary for fluent reading. Instead, you may draw a line on a piece of something clear (such as a sheet of acetate) and allow the child to use this to track print. This aid allows the child to look back and ahead to get information and still supports the child's ability to handle multiple lines of text.

You may teach your readers to think about where they need to sit during reading time so they do their best work. You may suggest they make better use of bookmarks or set goals for themselves or find more times for reading (on the bus on the way to school, before bed, in the morning, bring a book with them when they go places). To help children teach you about their reading lives at home, you'll want to begin sending books home with kids each night right away. Perhaps for homework one evening, along with reading their books, you will ask children to draw a picture of themselves at home reading, a picture that helps you understand the kind of reader this child is at home. Where does the child like to read? Does the child share books with anyone? Does the child have a special place to keep books? Does anyone else in the family love reading? Later you can use these sketches to help children make New School

Year's resolutions for how their reading lives will change during the upcoming year. You could ask children to draw a picture of what their home reading lives will be like during the new school year. Their plans can pertain to their reading lives as a whole; this is a time in the year to be sure you help children and their parents think about the year ahead as a clean slate and make some choices about how reading will go at home and at school in alignment with the Common Core State Standards.

It is likely that most of the class can read for quite a long while—at least thirty minutes, say—provided you are vigilant about insisting that they keep their eyes on their books, their books in their hands, reading during private reading time, saving all conversation for partner time. However, you may find that five or six of your students have nowhere near that amount of stamina for reading. One of the reasons we suggest holding off on your formal running records and other assessments is so that you can be circulating among the kids, coaching with short prompts: “Stop and think.” “Make sure you can picture what is happening.” “Go back and reread if you need to.” “Give that word your best try.” Along with circulating and prompting, you'll want to be complimenting: “I love the way Joshua went straight from reading one book to his next! He didn't stop and wait for me to come along and tell him—he just did it!” “Some of you are coming up with such great ways to use Post-its to stop and think! I can't wait to share what you guys are doing!” And, of course, you'll squeeze in some informal assessments using classroom library books and observations, as long as kids are reading the whole time while you meet with one child briefly.

In addition to making your presence felt in the classroom, you can also give kids some strategies for maintaining stamina. You can encourage kids to reread often and for different purposes—rereading the first chapter of a chapter book can help you figure out who all the characters are the first time through, and then you can think about what the characters are feeling and what might happen in the story the second time through. Rereading shorter books or parts of your book can help you read more smoothly and more fluently, in alignment with the Common Core State Standards. Often when we finish a book, especially a longer book, we reread our favorite parts or we reread parts that fit with the ending. We say, “Wait a second, wasn't there something earlier in the book that was a clue to the ending? Let me go find that part. Aha! There it is!”

We recommend children work with a partner five minutes or so each day. For the first week of school, you can informally match children with partners based on last year's reading levels, then tweak those matches as you get to know your children. To get partnerships going, children might read a favorite or important part of the book aloud to their partner and then talk about it. This will give you natural opportunities to listen to children read and will give children some of the fluency practice they need, while simultaneously giving them something to talk about. You can suggest that after reading an important part they talk about what they notice in that part or how that part fits into the whole story. You may want to emphasize that children will invent their own great stuff in their partnership conversations, using everything they know from first grade. In some schools, the first-grade teachers create a chart to pass up to second grade, reminding children of what they learned about partners in first

grade—partners can act parts out, talk about what the character is learning, even swap books when they finish a book.

Most second-grade partnerships could spend most of their five minutes talking, only reading or rereading parts of their books that help them spark a conversation. However, some of your children who are not reading at grade level might benefit from taking turns reading to each other, as they did in the beginning of first grade. You could pull together a small group of children reading at easier levels (E/F/G) and teach them that they can read together during partner time, taking turns on pages, echo reading, even choral reading. This extends the amount of time these children are actually reading, provides built-in support for children who are struggling with reading and likely to become disengaged, and helps support fluency.

## **Part Two: Reading Is Thinking—Before, During, and After**

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The second part of this unit is all about getting comprehension strategies up and running. You'll want to angle this work toward the early-chapter-book readers in your room, since this is the big work of second grade. We hope the first week of school was all about observing your children at work, giving them lots of options for how to read their books and the tools (charts, Post-its, bookmarks) to bring everything they already know to second grade.

You could swing into the second part of the unit by finding a few children to spotlight. You might teach minilessons in which the teaching points are comprehension strategies children have tried, either on their own or with coaching from you. For example, you might highlight that now that they are reading longer books, the way they preview texts should change. You might say, "Now that we're reading longer books, we need to set ourselves up before reading a little bit differently than we did in first grade. I want to show you something that [student's name] did! She read the title *and* the blurb on the back of the book. She also looked at the table of contents to see what the titles are for the chapters, and she flipped through the book to look for any pictures so that she could think to herself, 'How is this book probably going to go?'" Children could also share how they did this work during five minutes of partner time each day, after they've had plenty of time to read independently. You'll continue to observe them at work as they read alone and as they work with partners, making changes to partnerships as needed.

You might also say to your kids, "When we predict, we're not just using the pictures like we used to, but we're also using everything we know about how stories tend to go—that there will probably be a problem and some kind of solution. As we read, we hold our prediction in our mind and change it as we learn more and more about the story."

No matter what strategies you decide to highlight, you'll want to be sure that the work you are teaching is truly second-grade work, the kind of thinking that kids would do in the levels the children are now reading. You'll want to introduce lessons

that teach kids how to use a repertoire of strategies—like keeping track of everything that is happening in the story *and* thinking about how the characters feel and why—as opposed to simple individual strategies.

As children read, then, it is essential that you check that the books they read are making sense to them. You can remind children how to monitor for sense by asking, “What is going on so far?” or “What’s happening in this part?” You will teach your kids that if they lose track of what a book is really saying, it can help to reread as a way to get back into the book when they’ve lost their place or lost track of what’s happening.

Try to find ways to continue to make the minilessons come from work that some kids are already doing, so that the workshop belongs to the kids—they’ll feel more independent, as if they are learning from one another as well as from you. You may need to have some tools and strategies up your sleeve for getting some kids to do some new work you can then share with the class. For example, you may recruit one child to insert a couple of “stop and think” Post-its into the middle of a text he is just starting to read as a way to remind himself to monitor for comprehension, then teach other groups or even your whole class that they, too, might decide to do this.

You’ll also probably want to teach your students that while we’re reading and when we’ve finished a book, it helps to think about how one book is similar to or different from other books we have read. Were there similar problems? Did the characters react the same way in both books? If it’s a series, what do we think will happen in the next book in the series? Even students who are not reading more than one book in a series can use what they know about characters in other books they’ve read to think about the characters in their current book. You could imagine kids saying, “Boy, Henry and Mudge are a lot like Frog and Toad! They do everything together—they are best friends!”

Throughout this part of the unit, you’ll continue to circulate and informally assess your students, moving children to new reading levels and switching partners as necessary—though by now your children might be able to sustain independent reading on their own long enough for you to begin to meet with students one-on-one to conduct formal running records.

Remember that, above all, readers make choices about the work they need to do as they read. That is, a reader need not wait for you to remind her every day, “Try to picture the characters in your mind as you read. Picture how they would move, how they would talk, how they would sound.” A good reader knows if this strategy has been helpful in the past, then she should keep on doing it every day. You may want to teach children that many readers have our own private sheet of reminders that guide us.

All of the above teaching is most effective if kids have a real purpose for trying out new strategies and pushing their thinking. Reading partners are the perfect structure. You’ve already set them up, informally on the first day of school. Often whomever the child is sitting next to on the carpet can be their informal reading partner until you’ve had a chance to get to know the kids better.

Your students have had reading partners since their first week of school in kindergarten. However, depending on your kids’ experiences with reading workshop and read-alouds in previous school years, you may find it necessary to model how to turn



and talk and to revisit basic conversation techniques. It will be important that you approach reading aloud with a plan to teach methods not only for talking well but also for comprehending well. They could be the very same strategies for thinking that you plan to teach during reading workshop. At this point in the year you may want to focus on reading a bit and then stopping to model how you monitor for sense. You can show students how you stop and retell the main events before you move on. You can pause and say, “So far \_\_\_\_\_ happened. I wonder what will happen next?” Readers can turn and tell their partner what they think will happen and why they think this. Some of your read-alouds might also focus on reacting to the text and making character inferences by putting yourself in the character’s shoes. You can say, “Wow! Sophie is so angry. If that were me I would \_\_\_\_\_.” You can prompt students to explain their reactions to the text to their partners.

Of course, you’ll also want to support children’s conversations with larger groups as well. We recommend leading whole-class conversations several times a week. These conversations are not only a key method for teaching comprehension, they are also a critical teaching opportunity for speaking and listening (as required by the Common Core State Standards). One option for the start of the year is after you read aloud to say, “Who can get us started in a conversation about \_\_\_\_\_?” Then call on one child, and after he or she speaks, scan the room, nodding for someone else to participate. As you do this, watch for instances when children do the sorts of things you hope they will do. That is, if one child says, “I think \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_” and then refers to the text, note this: “Wow. I am so impressed that you already know that it is important to back up your ideas by saying, ‘I think this because’ and then referring to the text. You’re just starting second grade and already you know that!” Then when one child adds to or talks back to what another child has said, you can again make a fuss about this. If a child asks another child to say more, you can practically fall over backward in excitement. Of course, if children do none of these things, you’ll need to decide how you can get all these behaviors going. One good possibility is to take your class on a field trip to visit older students who do these things, and as they do them, point this out to your youngsters. Then, back in your own classroom, you can channel children toward doing all that you hope they’ll do by saying such things as, “Can anyone talk back to what Joe just said? Do you agree? Do you have an example? Let Joe know.”

By naming and spotlighting what some children do well, you will be able to revisit some fundamental characteristics of a high-level conversation, such as speaking clearly, listening actively, disagreeing civilly, adding to what someone has said, staying with the text instead of going off-track, and so on. You might also transcribe the talk a bit so you can reflect on what went well and what aspects need work.

### **Part Three: Partners Can Talk about Books to Grow Ideas**

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For the first two weeks of school, a lot of the teaching about speaking and listening and about growing ideas about books happens during whole-class read-aloud. In the

last part of the unit you taught your class some very important strategies for comprehension; now that you have basic partner routines and accountable talk prompts established, you'll want to teach some minilessons on how to make partner time engaging but also a time that pushes your children's thinking—taking those basic comprehension strategies and turning them into conversations that support ideas and encourage deeper thinking about their books. At this point, the unit builds on what your kids now know about reading partnerships to lift the level of the work they do with their partner. The ultimate goal in this part of the unit is to start the yearlong work of teaching children to support and elaborate on an idea.

Throughout the unit, you may want to use mid-workshop or share teaching points to remind kids of some of the active listening and basic partnership routines they already know from first-grade reading workshop: partners sit shoulder to shoulder, with one book in the middle; we listen carefully and ask clarifying questions when we aren't sure what our partner means; we compliment each other on the strategies we tried during reading workshop.

But you'll want to move beyond the basic routines quickly. You might begin by teaching children to be better prepared to work with a partner by marking places in their books where they had some big ideas or places they think would be interesting to talk about. Partners don't just show up without any ideas—we get ready by thinking about ideas while we read.

You might teach students that as they read they can be thinking about the characters. They already know a lot from last year. What kind of person is the character? How would you describe this character? You can get ready for partnerships by thinking about what you could say about the character. In a minilesson, you could role-play partners having a conversation about why they think Poppleton is too shy, or how Toad is so grumpy compared with Frog. During read-aloud you might practice talking about character traits, perhaps even creating a chart of character traits with pictures of familiar characters to help prompt conversations.

You can coach into student conversations during read-aloud and reading workshop by encouraging children to stay on one topic for as long as they can, rather than jumping from topic to topic. Talking about one character at a time is one strategy for doing this. Teach kids to jot the idea they are having about a character on a Post-it and put it right where they can see it while they talk; the Post-it will remind them of what they were talking about, so they can stick to it and say as much as they can. When they've exhausted one idea, they can choose or create a new Post-it to talk about.

## **Part Four: Being an Independent Problem Solver**

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At this point, your workshop will be in full swing. You've informally assessed all of your students, matched them with partners, and gotten everything up and running. Your kids have been working hard at reading for a few more minutes each day, and by now the expectation is clear—reading workshop is a time for long, uninterrupted,

sustained independent reading. Now it's time to circle back and begin more formal assessments, one-to-one conferring, and small-group work during your reading workshop. For this to go smoothly, your kids need to be independent problem solvers, reading on their own as you meet with individuals and groups.

As this unit comes to a close, you may want to teach a few lessons that emphasize monitoring for sense and fix-up strategies. That is, you'll want your kids to understand that readers notice when things aren't making sense and then do something about it—and put this understanding into practice. We've all had the experience of reading the same paragraph over and over while our mind wanders to some other topic—but a proficient reader recognizes that something has gone wrong and has strategies for getting back on track.

For example, in a minilesson you may want to say to your kids that there are times we are reading when we suddenly realize something doesn't make sense or there is a word we can't figure out. That is a really good thing, not because we made a mistake, but because we noticed that something was not quite right. When this happens we stop and ask ourselves, "What could I do to fix this part?" Then we look at the strategies we know on the charts all around our classroom and choose some to try. As we do this we will probably discover that some strategies are more helpful than others, some just work faster than others. We choose what will work.

One of the most predictable problems in a second-grade reading workshop is that there will be children who raise their hand, or worse, get up and come over to you when they are stuck on a word. These are children who somewhere along the way have learned that it is more important to get it right than it is to be independent. This part of the unit is meant to help all your students understand that you prefer they figure things out by being smart problem solvers. You might say, "Sometimes we come across a word in our book we do not know. When this happens we stop and think quickly, 'What could I do to figure out this word?' Once again, as second-grade readers, we have decisions to make. We could think about what is happening, then reread to get a running start, all the time thinking about what would make sense here. We also can start right in with the letters, chunking them and trying to figure out what the word might be saying, and then after a bit of that, we reread and put the first bit of the word in there, and think, 'What might the rest of this word be?' "

As you near the final days of your unit, you'll want to remind students of the whole repertoire of strategies they've learned—from goal setting using their book logs to using Post-its to mark places to stop and think to strategies for talking with partners. It's important that these habits don't wind up lasting only a day or two. This whole unit is meant to last the year—everything they have learned is for every day, not just one day.

## **Ideas for Reading Celebrations for This Unit**

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If your unit of study focused on the fact that your children are becoming grown-up readers and are making decisions about what they want to do as readers, you might

end the unit with a celebration of how much they have grown as readers over the years. To create a “then and now” museum, you might ask children to display a book that was their favorite when they were a kindergartner along with their current favorite (they can get the earlier favorite book from the school library or bring it from home). You might even include photographs of each child from then—and now! Instead of creating a museum, your readers could visit a kindergarten class and tell these children about themselves as readers (listening while the kindergartners do the same). Another idea for a celebration would be to have children use their logs as a jumping-off point. Perhaps they could look back across all of their logs for the month, reflect on all they’ve read, and make a book list with personalized recommendations to give to another reader in the class.

## Word Study and Phonics and Shared Reading

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Over the course of second grade, children will need both explicit instruction about the features of words and practice applying their knowledge to their reading and writing. Typical second graders will spend the bulk of the year learning about the various ways in which vowel sounds work. According to the Common Core State Standards, second graders need to distinguish between short and long vowel sounds in one-syllable words when reading; know sound-spelling correspondence for common CVVC (vowel team) spelling patterns; decode regular long vowel two-syllable words, prefixes, and suffixes; and identify ambiguous vowel patterns and grade level high-frequency words.

You can begin making plans for word study by administering assessments to determine what children already know about letters and words and what they are ready to learn next. We recommend the spelling inventory in *Words Their Way*. It is administered just as you’d administer a spelling test. This assessment will help you determine each child’s stage of spelling development so that you can better plan for both whole-class and small-group word study.

Once you have assessed all your students, you will have a better sense of how you can organize your word study. You can anticipate that you’ll need to provide small-group support. You’ll notice your students will need to work on different features of words. Managing small groups can at first feel daunting. You’ll want to start off by teaching children the routines for several word study activities such as sorting, word hunts, making words with magnetic letters, and playing games like Lotto or Follow the Path. You might teach routines for new activities to the whole class as you review some of the features taught in the previous year. Many of the children may need just a quick review of routines if they have had activities like sorting or word hunts in first grade. Once you have formed groups and students know routines, all students can sort at their own stage of spelling development. For example, you might have one group working on *-r* influenced vowels (*car, for, her*), one group working on short and long vowel sounds, and one group working on a specific long vowel pattern.

The Common Core State Standards expect second graders to be able to distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words. Thus, you may want to start your word work by contrasting short and long vowel sounds in one-syllable words. To begin, start with sorting pictures of short and long *a* words (like *cat* and *plane*), so that children can hear the difference between the short and long *a*. After children demonstrate that they can hear the sounds, you can add the printed words to the sort. During word study children may wish to take their just-right books and hunt for additional short and long *a* words. This activity allows children to apply their knowledge to their reading, which is essential for transfer. You may also wish to select shared reading poems that contain several short and long vowel single-syllable words and prompt students to use them during interactive or independent writing. Additionally, students may keep track of short and long *a* words in a word study notebook to be used later as a reference during reading and writing. You may continue exploring the rest of the short/long vowels individually and then spend a week or two reviewing them all together. Remember that the word study work of second graders (vowel work) is complex. Children need to learn that vowels can make several different sounds, that the sound can be affected by other vowels and certain consonants, and that one sound can be represented by various spelling patterns. This work is very different from the letter-sound work that happened in kindergarten and first grade (*b* makes one sound and is always written the same) and may require a slower pace for transfer to occur. In fact, research suggests that a typical child may be involved in the spelling stage of vowel work for approximately two years, so make sure to allow for plenty of review, reflection, and activities that require children to apply this work to their reading and writing.

You will also want to create a word wall for the high-frequency words you will be studying with your class. The first step is to assess which of the high-frequency words most of your children already know, using the TCRWP High-Frequency Word List Assessment (or another similar list, such as the Dolch list or Marie Clay's list). You can begin your instruction with words that most of your class cannot yet read automatically (when assessing high-frequency words, do not count the words that your children slowly decode; you're looking for automaticity with these words).

In planning shared reading, you will want to gather texts that you can use with students to support their word work and get them in a routine around shared reading. These may be big books (fiction and nonfiction), scripts, short texts, poems, songs, and so on that are close to the levels that most of your students are reading, that contain the spelling features you are working on, and that you can enlarge using a Smart Board, an overhead projector, or a document camera or by writing them on chart paper.

As you start word work in shared reading, you could do some activities that get kids using meaning, syntax, and visual sources of information as they read the text. For example, you might cover up a word that changes in a pattern book ("guess the covered word") so that students have to use context clues to figure out what the word means (meaning), as well as the pattern (syntax). Then, once your students make

some smart guesses, instead of just uncovering the whole word, you might reveal it one part at a time, so that your students see just the initial sounds, then the ending, to help them cross-check their guesses (the print is the visual/graphophonic information). This will also help them problem-solve words that are not random but instead go with the meaning of the text.

After a few days of reading different texts and having students search for meaning and syntax when they encounter tricky parts, integrate searching for meaning, syntax, and visual information. Now as you and the students read the text and you come across a tricky part, have the students think about what's happening in the text, search the picture, reread the sentence, and try something that would make sense, sound right, and look right. Keep this routine up throughout the month, allowing students to learn to efficiently search for information (meaning, syntax, and visual) in integrated ways as they encounter tricky parts in the texts they read.

To support your word study curriculum, below are a few suggested lessons, based on features of spelling in which many second graders tend to need explicit instruction:

<b>If you decide to teach . . .</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Words Their Way</i>, 4th edition</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons, Grade 2</i> (Pinnell &amp; Fountas)</b>
Short and long vowels	6-1, 6-2 (pp. 188–189)	LS3, LS4 (pp. 79–86)
Long vowel spelling patterns	6-2, 6-4 to 6-15 (pp. 189–199)	SP3 to SP6 (pp. 173–188)
Consonant blends (e.g., <i>sc, cl</i> )	5-6 to 5-10 (pp. 157–159)	LS1 (pp. 71–74), LS5 (pp. 87–90) LS6 (pp. 91–94) (adapt to teach different consonant blends)
High-frequency words	pp. 182–183	HF1 to HF9 (pp. 235–270)

## One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

This unit is about getting everything going—routines, stamina, strong reading, enthusiasm for reading workshop, everything. Your second graders ended first grade able to read for forty minutes and will remember the basic routines with just a little practice and coaching. The teaching points listed below are provided as a guide, but you may want to adapt this plan to the particular needs of your own second graders.

Remember that the end-of-the-year benchmark for first grade is level I/J/K, meaning that even with a little bit of attrition over the summer, your new second graders will come to you ready to read books like *Fly Guy* or *Henry and Mudge*. Of course, there may be a number of children who come back to school ready to read harder books—perhaps they read during the summer or attended a summer program or simply grew in age and maturity. We invite you to adapt some of the teaching points



below by referring to later units of study to find strategies for children doing work at higher levels.

On the other hand, if you have had a chance to look over your children's reading levels from first grade and you know that you have a large number of students who ended first grade reading level H or below, you will need to make plans for doing some intense catch-up work. You will need to match kids to books as best you can until you've had a chance to conduct formal running records so that you can begin supporting readers through book introductions, coaching, guided reading, and small-group work. The sooner you begin this work, the better. You may need to revisit some of the teaching points from last year's first-grade units, maybe even borrowing some of the charts from first-grade classrooms if you can, to help kids remember all the great work they did at the end of last year.

To support your reading workshop, you might want to do extra shared reading, perhaps two or three lessons each day instead of one, highlighting strategies like predicting and then revising or confirming predictions, stopping and thinking as you read, and retelling important parts of the text, as well as strategies for reading smoothly and expressively. You will of course want to use shared reading to model how readers use a combination of strategies to figure out unfamiliar words, never relying on just one. You can then revisit those shared reading texts during reading workshop with small groups of children who need extra support so they can catch up. You will probably want to provide as much time as possible for independent reading, too, if you are concerned about your students' reading levels—perhaps structuring your workshop so that children read as long as they can, then take five minutes to talk with partners, then return to reading independently for another stretch of time. Perhaps you'll even provide a second time for reading each day, borrowing five or ten minutes from other parts of your day, or recruit parents or after-school care providers to ensure that extra reading is also happening outside school.

## **Part One: Helping Children Make Decisions Based on Habits, Volume, and Stamina**

- “Today I want to teach you that grown-up readers (like you guys, now that you are second graders) make decisions about how our reading lives will go. When we were littler, sometimes we had people who told us, sit here, read this, start by doing this, then do that, Post-it this, and so forth. But this is a more grown-up year, and *this* year (and for the rest of your life) it will be important for readers to make decisions about how *you* want your reading life to go.”
- *Example:* “You’ll decide for example, whether a book is just right for you, how you’ll get ready to read a book, whether you are going to write your ideas on a Post-it or not. . . .”



to eat less candy, we write down all the candy we eat, just to make ourselves think about it. If we want to find more times in the day to read, we might make ourselves a book bag and start carrying it with us all the time, and we might keep a Post-it in the back of a book where we record the time when we are reading, and the day. That way we can push ourselves to read at least four times a day and stuff like that.”

## **Part Two: Reading Is Thinking—Before, During, and After**

- “Readers, now that you are in second grade and ready to do grown-up things, I want to teach you that as grown-up readers, we can read with our minds on fire. When grown-ups read books, we are *always* thinking. Grown-up readers think before we start reading, then more while we’re reading, and then some more when we’re done reading. Today I want to teach you that to *start* a book, you can begin thinking all these huge thoughts from the second that the you pick the book up.”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers set ourselves up to read just like we set ourselves up to play a game. We start noticing things, and thinking about what the game might be about before we even start playing it. We do the same things with our books. We look at the front cover, the back cover, and we take a look inside the book. We then imagine some ways the book might go.”
  - *Tip:* “Readers also know that there are different kinds of books, just like there are different types of games. Just like we try to figure out how each game works and what we need to do to play it, we try to figure out how each book works and what strategies we’ll need to use to read this type of book. Readers get ourselves ready to read by asking ‘What kind of book is this? What do I have to do when I read books that go like this?’ ”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers think about the story throughout the entire book. As we read, we pay attention to how each part of a story fits together. It’s like putting a puzzle together. When doing a puzzle we pay close attention to the pieces and how they fit together, looking at the shapes, the colors, and back at the cover of the box to see what it should look like when the pieces are all put into place. We do the same thing with books.”
  - *Tip:* “We know from looking at the picture and the title on the cover what the story might be about and then as we read we think about each part and how the pages fit together with that initial idea.”
- “Today I want to teach you that after finishing books, we will often reread them over and over again so we can read more smoothly, quickly, and with more

understanding. Just as with a game or a puzzle, each time we play or put it together it gets smoother and quicker, and we have a better understanding of how the pieces all fit! As readers we want to do the same thing.”

- “Today I want to teach you that readers think about the book as we read it and when it doesn’t make sense—which will often happen—readers notice this. We say, ‘What?’ and never just slide along through a book when it doesn’t make sense. Readers go back and reread, turning our brains on high, and this time the book often makes more sense.”
- “Today I want to teach you that now we’re reading big-kid books, and when we read big-kid books we have to think like big kids. We don’t just pay attention only to what is happening in the book, but we also pay attention to how the characters feel and why.”

### **Part Three: Partners Can Talk about Books to Grow Ideas**

- “Today I want to teach you that readers take care of our partnerships. Just like when we play games with friends, we cheer each other on. We can do the same thing with our reading partners. We can share the parts that are tricky and help each other figure out those parts. When things are not clear we can use each other to understand our books better.”
- “Today I want to teach you that a reading partnership can be so-so or it can be awesome. To make our partnership awesome, we find ways to let each other know that we are listening carefully to everything our partner says. When we really listen, we react or respond to whatever our partner tells us.”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers prepare and plan for partner reading time. We mark places where we had some big ideas, where we figured out a new strategy, or where we were confused. Partners can then talk about these things with each other. This is a way we can begin to collect ideas and tips to use whenever we read. Remember, two brains are better than one!”
- “Today I want to teach you that reading partners are friends and friends often recommend books to each other. When your partner takes your suggestions and reads the same books, you will have so much more to talk about because you’ve both read the same books!”
  - *Tip:* “When you want to recommend a book, you start with the title of the book, tell a little bit about the characters or the subject that you found interesting and why you think your friend might enjoy reading the book.”

- ▶ *Tip:* “When you need a recommendation, ask your partner which books they think you might like reading.”
- “Today I want to teach you that reading partners try to invent new things to do together with our books. We can find new ways to talk about books, to collect our thinking, or to figure out tricky parts. Partners can also use the reading charts we have created together. In other words, just like grown-up readers, we can decide what we will do when we get together to talk about our books. Readers prepare and plan for partner reading time.”

## **Part Four: Being an Independent Problem Solver**

- “Today I want to teach you that there are times we are reading when we suddenly realize something doesn’t make sense or there is a word we can’t figure out. That is a really good thing, not because we made a mistake, but because we noticed that something was not quite right. When this happens we stop and ask ourselves, ‘What could I do to fix this part?’ Then we look at the strategies we know on the chart and choose some to try. As we do this we will probably discover that some strategies are more helpful than others, some just work faster than others. We choose what will work.”
- “Today I want to teach you that sometimes as readers we come across a word in our book we do not know. When this happens we stop and think quickly, ‘What could I do to figure out this word?’ Once again, as second-grade readers, we have decisions to make.”
  - ▶ *Tip:* “We could think about what is happening, then reread to get a running start, all the time thinking about what would make sense here.”
  - ▶ *Tip:* “We also can start right in with the letters, chunking them and trying to figure out what the word might be saying, and then after a bit of that, we reread and put the first bit of the word in there, and think, ‘What might the rest of this word be?’ ”
- “When we were beginning readers we used to look just at the first letter, get our mouths ready, and try to sound out the word. That was *all* we did! Well, as second-grade readers we have outgrown that strategy, just as we have outgrown our baby clothes. We now know that we can’t do just *one thing*! We need to use more than one strategy. We need to reread and think, ‘What would make sense here?’ while we also look at the word part by part.”



## UNIT TWO

# Tackling Trouble

## *Assessment-Based Small-Group Work*

OCTOBER

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: I/J/K)

We're suggesting that by early October, you turn your readers' attention to the challenge of working on hard words and tricky parts of books, as discussed in the Common Core State Standards. Of course, you won't be asking readers to rely on phonics alone as they read, but to include phonics as one source of information. The hard part is that reading involves doing several things at once. Try patting your head and circling your hand on your stomach simultaneously. It's not easy to keep the two different actions going at once. Readers need to do a lot of that. Readers need to envision the story, think about what's happening, and predict what could come next, while also working with little black marks on the page. We're suggesting that in this unit you especially rally readers to draw on word-solving strategies. Of course, at any time, you can press the pause button on this focused inquiry to remind kids of previous work, saying for example, "Oops! We can't possibly figure out these hard words unless we're remembering to think about what's happening in the text—some of us forgot all that!"

When you consider what to teach readers to do in the way of word-solving work, remember that although their reading skills may have grown a bit rusty over the summer months, second graders do bring a bank of strategies they know. You won't have to start from scratch. In fact, your assessments will enable you to plan teaching that will challenge your students to draw on all they already know how to do.

As you plan instruction for this unit, we urge you to think big rather than planning to teach strategies in dribs and drabs. Rather than teaching one tiny strategy on one



day, another on another day, you will want to reach for the sky and teach your readers that ultimately they need to be resourceful and proactive problem solvers. You'll want to model how readers use strategies in more complex and layered ways. For example, your children probably already know how to break a word into chunks to figure it out, but they may not realize how to do that while monitoring meaning. Many of your lessons in second grade will support kids in orchestrating strategies, not using one strategy at a time.

Besides orchestrating strategies, you'll also want to demonstrate the sophisticated print strategies they'll need as most move to books that are between levels H and L. These books will put unfamiliar polysyllabic words in your readers' paths. If these words paralyze them, if they stop in their tracks and look for someone to rescue them, then readers who may have made good progress before now will suddenly plateau. How important it is, then, that you move mountains to be sure that your children have the mindset and the tools to tackle tricky words with vigor.

One thing we know is that phonics instruction needs to be especially tailored to children's development. You can tell all readers that it is wise to think about the character traits of a character. A reader who is reading *The Cat in the Hat* can do that work alongside a reader reading *Tom Sawyer*. But if a child does not know her consonants, working on blends or vowels is not going to "stick." This means that before you begin this unit, you need to assess your readers using the spelling inventory. (We mentioned this in September as well.)

In addition to making sure that you are matching your students' phonics instruction to the data you collect, you'll want to do a set of running records on each of your readers. Many teachers will have completed a set in September, while others choose to let children "read away the summer setback" and assess them in the beginning of October. If you have done running records previously and been trained to do them, you won't need to do them on a special form unless your school has different mandates. Just pull a chair alongside a child who is reading and say, "Will you read aloud?" Then take notes on any sheet of paper, noting miscues as usual. If you are a bit unclear about running records, then you'll probably want to use paper that is formatted to help you take and analyze these assessment notes. In either case, whether you are just looking on as a child reads his just-right book or whether you have brought the child to a specific text, it is important that you see what happens when the child reads a text level you anticipate will be a bit hard for him.

When a text is a bit difficult, the reader's work will contain enough miscues that you should be able to see patterns that shed light on what that child does and does not yet control. You will be able to see whether the child leans especially on phonics, on the meaning of the story, or on the syntax of sentences to cope with difficult texts. This will give you enormous support in knowing how to teach a particular child. That is, if one child reads *I jumped into the water* as *I jumped into the winter* and does not self-correct, then you will know that this child is already relying more on letters and on phonics than on meaning. So if this child later confronts difficulty in the midst of reading, you will teach by coaching: "What would make sense?" "Reread and think,

‘What *might* fit in here?’ ” You will not be apt to say, “Check the letters. What sound does the first letter make?”

As you do these running records, you’ll probably find that summer rustiness has worn off and children are ready to progress—they often are! In any case, fine-tune each reader’s selection of books with ones that are just right and clarify where a child can go to find more books that will be just right. If some of your students’ running records indicate that they are accurate and can comprehend at, say, level K but that their fluency is a bit shaky at this level, remember that you can give kids mostly books that are just right (in this instance, J books). You can also include a few books that are a notch harder (in this instance, level K books). If children’s speed at moving through books has increased, that can be sign they’re ready to move up. You will probably want to offer these readers transitional baggies containing both easier and harder books and provide extra support for the harder books. Same-book partnerships help, as do book introductions.

Then, too, because this unit is especially assessment-based, you will need to lean on small-group instruction more than ever, and you’ll need to make sure your minilessons are truly relevant to a span of readers. A minilesson that is appropriate for the whole class might sound like this: “When you get to a tricky word, instead of just thinking, ‘This is too hard for me. I’m stuck,’ it helps to think to yourself, ‘Is there a part of this word that I *do* know?’ Then you can use the part of the word that you do know to help you figure out the hard parts of it.” One way to make your minilessons applicable to many readers is to name your strategies in ways that *are* applicable to a broad range of readers. We provide lots of help doing this throughout this discussion.

To differentiate your minilessons, you will also want to think about ways in which you can support diverse readers during the active involvement portion. You might say, “Try this in your [just-right] book.” Some teachers find that it helps to establish a seating chart that essentially groups children into ability clusters (without making this obvious) so that you can say, “Get with your small group and \_\_\_\_\_,” engineering kids to work within ability clusters and then giving each cluster an appropriate text to work with.

## **Decide on Your Theme Song for This Unit: Readers Tackle Trouble with Vigor**

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Your role at the start of any unit is to be the inspirational leader, drumming up kids’ passion for the important work of the upcoming month. Your first job, then, is to be sure that the classroom community is sold on the big work of this unit and that children know how to carry on, day in and day out. Until youngsters are launched in the big work of this unit, refrain from tossing a zillion little specific strategies at them lest they misunderstand and think the goal is simply to use the strategy of the day.

So stop and think. What really *is* your goal for this upcoming month? Think about what many of your children are doing now when they encounter hard words in

books. Think about the relationship between writing, reading, and phonics. You need to approach any unit with very clear goals.

Perhaps the most important goal for you in this unit is to turn your readers into active problem solvers. In a story, when a character encounters difficulty, the character doesn't say, "Oh well, forget it. I didn't really want that anyhow." No way! Instead, when a character encounters difficulty, there is rising action in the story, as the character tries one thing after another to somehow reach the rainbow, solve the problem, climb the mountain. Teach your children that good readers expect there will be hard parts when reading a book, and when we encounter those hard parts, instead of sitting paralyzed and waiting, squeaking out a little "Help me!" we roll up our sleeves and get going. We use all the strategies we've learned to somehow resolve the difficulty and keep following the storyline. You may want to tell children that readers, like characters in a story, will inevitably encounter difficulty. When this happens, we—like those characters—need to spring into response actions aligned with the Common Core State Standards. (Of course, there are other metaphors you can use to rally kids around the big work of this unit. You could decide to sustain the metaphor you introduced in your first unit, suggesting that you are going to show your children what grown-up readers do—surely you can convince them that grown-up readers don't just quit whenever we encounter a tough word or a tricky part!)

Once you decide on a theme for this unit, you will incorporate the language of that theme into the charts and other materials you use. If you decide to use the bumps-in-the-road metaphor, you and your children may create a chart titled "How Readers Tackle the Bumps in the Road." If you plan to rally children around the idea that grown-up readers not only make decisions about our reading lives but also about the strategies we'll use to tackle tough words, then your chart might be titled "How Grown-Up Readers Tackle Fifth-Grade Words." That is, don't hesitate to turn your teachers' language about reading into a lingo that is tailored for children. You can be teaching kids reading skills while they think you are teaching bike riding!

As you consider which skills to teach during this unit, think about the texts you will use in your minilessons. When your teaching aims to help readers tackle print, it will be especially important for students to see the print of the text with which you are working so plan to use shared reading texts and to use your classroom technology—Smart Boards, document cameras, or overhead projectors. Make sure the texts you select represent both the levels and kinds of texts your students are reading. Remember, kids can be reading nonfiction as well as fiction texts, so make sure your minilesson demonstrations reflect both. You may use interactive writing, too, during this unit. The work that a writer does to problem-solve a tricky word has a lot to do with the work that a reader does.

Of course, during your minilessons, you will teach children strategies for tackling hard words. In alignment with the Common Core State Standards, you'll also want to keep children's interest in these strategies peaked by setting partners up to work together to tackle hard words and tricky parts during reading workshop. Think about ways in which partnership conversations and Post-its can support the work of this

particular unit by spotlighting readers' strategies for tackling words. That is, the content of the unit will always affect not only the minilessons and some of the small-group work but also some of what children write, collect, and share with partners. Remember that partners can Post-it parts where they had confusion or where they tried to figure out a new word. You'll want to teach partners to offer helpful prompts rather than simply call out the word in question. Partners can remind each other to look at the first part of the word, to think, "What would make sense?" and to reread the word. Partners can also help each other try other strategies, referencing the classroom chart for possibilities.

## Part One: Readers Notice and Tackle Tricky Parts: Chunking Parts of Words, Drawing on Meaning as Well as Phonics

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One of the most essential skills you will want to teach your students is that readers can tell when we hit a hard word, a bump in the road. We notice that we just hit trouble and say, "Whoops." Good readers don't pretend we didn't see that hard word and just mumble past it, instead we notice it. That's big work that you'll definitely want to rally children to do. Of course, once readers notice difficulty, our next step is to tackle the difficulty with gusto.

Once you've gotten kids to at least approximate the big work of noticing and tackling hard words, you'll want to zoom in a bit and equip them with specific strategies for doing this. And here the important thing for you to realize (and for you to teach your children) is that readers do not rigidly tackle every word by starting at the left side of the word and progressing along letter by letter, sounding the word out. Research shows, instead, that efficient readers are more apt to move across a word, working with word parts. This means that you will teach your readers that when they come to a hard word, they should probably try looking at the first few letters of the word, thinking of words they already know that have parts like that. You might demonstrate this by looking, for example, at the word *umbrella* and saying, "I'm looking at the first part of this word. /Um/ that looks like part of words I've read. /Um/. Let's see, what's the next part?" Pointing to *br* you might say, "What could that say? Let's put those two parts together, thinking about what's happening in the story and then let's think about what this word might be." When children tackle a word and don't know what it says, they won't necessarily break it apart into its correct syllables. You might make this easy for them at first by emphasizing compound words, encouraging children to take apart these words to solve them (e.g., *schoolbag*).

You are sure to find that children do not always have an easy time chunking words into their parts. The admonition for children to "look for little words *anywhere in the word*" often leads children awry, because they end up finding known words that do not help (e.g., the word *in* in *find* does not help solve the word). Teach children instead that usually they'll look at the vowel and a couple of letters after it. So a child who is trying to read *waterslide* could end up first tackling the first couple of letters—/wat/—then

the vowel and the letters after it: /wat/ersl/ide/. That is not a perfect way to break that word apart, but the admonition to look at the vowel and a couple letters after it is probably going to get a child on the right track. Remember that every syllable has a vowel in it, so vowels are key when breaking apart a word into its constituent parts. You'll be looking especially to see whether children use multiple word-solving strategies with flexibility. You may describe this to children as playing with the word in your mouth, trying different pronunciations.

This part's teaching is aligned with the second-grade Common Core State Standards that spotlight phonics and word recognition. According to the standards, students should enter second grade able to decode regularly spelled one-syllable words with long (*cake*) and short (*cat*) vowels. By the end of second grade they are expected to be able to decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels, words like *cupid* and *baker*. The standards also state that second graders should be able to decode words with common prefixes (*rewrite*) and suffixes (*joyful*). Being able to decode words with common letter teams like *oi* in *choice* or *ew* in *newspaper*, read words with inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences, and decode grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words are additional second-grade phonics standards. You will need to decide what's appropriate for specific students. Use your conferring notes and word study assessments to help you make these decisions.

This unit suggests that you spotlight active, resourceful word solving. However, just mentioning the importance of this in passing doesn't galvanize kids into action. On the other hand, there is a risk of harping on word solving too much. The only way for a reader to be successful is to draw on meaning and print simultaneously. Your assessments (running records) and daily observations will show that some of your children only zoom in on letters whenever they are stuck. They forget that drawing on a general sense of the story and what is apt to happen next makes word solving much more efficient. So remember to watch your teaching and its effect on readers. You can intersperse your emphasis on phonics with reminders that reading is always about making meaning. Be sure to reiterate the importance of meaning while doing word work and working with kids who tend to forget all about meaning.

It's worth taking a moment to clarify something about the importance of integrating phonics and meaning. The trick is not to focus on one of these sources of information one day, the other the next. What you want to teach children is to draw on both of these whenever they encounter a tricky word. As they try to figure out what the letters in a hard word say, they meanwhile need to be thinking, "What *could* this word say? What *would* make sense?" Only about 45% of words in English are phonetic, so simply saying "sound it out" will probably *not* work. The best solution is to use phonics and meaning in concert. Often after a reader has tackled just the first few letters in a word, she can predict the correct word from that starting syllable and her attention to meaning and sentence structure.

One of the things you might do is teach children that when they get to tricky words, they can ask themselves a specific question: "What kind of word would make sense and sound right here?" So for example, you might ask your students to "guess



the covered word” during a lesson. If the text is *The cat \_\_\_\_\_ sleeps on my bed*, you’ll want to teach your children to say to themselves, “What would make sense and sound right here?” The child will use what he knows is happening in the book and about language to help him figure out that some sort of time word will probably go into that spot, not something like *food* or *cute*. The child might guess that the tough word could be *always* or *never*. By using what is happening in the text, he can unlock what the word is apt to say and then look to letters to disqualify certain options.

We also want to teach kids about using inflectional endings—the endings of words that we have probably taught in word study, such as *-ing* or *-ed*. We want kids not to sound these parts out but to understand how to blend the sounds with the endings of the words.

## Part Two: Readers Read Known Words in a Snap and Check to Make Sure New Words Make Sense

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After spending time helping children orchestrate strategies to figure out tricky words, you may find that your children’s reading slows down and sputters a bit as they work diligently on words. In this next part, you’ll sand away this rough spot in their reading by teaching them how to read with increasing fluency. Even though you will want your children bravely to tackle hard words, you’ll also want to make sure that they *don’t* labor over and tackle every word. More than half the words readers encounter are the same thirty-six words! Lots of other words they encounter will be words that children should know with automaticity. It is important that by this time your children all have a substantial repertoire of words they “just know.” What a help these words will be as they read. This unit is a good time to rally children’s enthusiasm for extending their sight vocabularies, and one way to do this is to let them in on the fact that researchers say that by the time children are in second grade, they should know 150 sight vocabulary words “in a snap.”

Some of your children will especially need help on sight words, and chances are these youngsters have less stamina during independent reading. You may then suggest that these children take a few minutes during every reading workshop to strengthen their sight vocabulary muscles. For example, you may give these children word rings (cardboard cards strung on a chain) containing the words you hope that particular child can read “in a snap.” Perhaps one child will have seventy words on that word ring, another, a hundred. Children can remove the words they know perfectly to better focus on the words they almost know. Lists of high-frequency sight words are not hard to find—you can refer to the high-frequency words in the TCRWP assessment or you can use Fry’s word list, which is considered a standard for the field.

You could also suggest that readers who need special help with sight words play games to practice reading these words. One child can sit with another, looking at the word wall, and the first can say, “I spy a word that is \_\_\_\_\_,” giving hints until the other child guesses the selected word. Then, too, these children can simply be



given a pointer and asked to take time every day to read the words on the word wall. Of course, the best way for children to learn sight words is by meeting the words in just-right texts; this is the primary thing they do during reading workshop.

As children develop their sight vocabularies, you can teach them that knowing lots of words “in a snap” will make all the difference as they read. The words that children do know can help them with words they do not know. So if they know the sight word *some*, when they come to the word *c-o-m-e*, they can figure it out using the word they already know.

You will also want to teach children how to make guesses based on meaning. Often we tell kids to use context clues, but the word *context* may be too technical for a seven-year-old. Therefore, you will want to teach children how to think about what is happening in the story before the word to help build the world of the story and to think of a word that would fit. You may show children how we go through a Rolodex of words in our head to find one that feels like it makes the most sense and then continue reading to see whether that word makes sense with all the new information.

### Part Three: Readers Fix Our Reading When We Make a Mistake

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After completing the first parts of the unit, your students are likely to be reading with courage, accurately decoding tricky words. They’re likely to be reading with more fluency, smoothing out and speeding up their reading rate a bit. You may find, however, that they now go into “overdrive.” They’ll make some mistakes and just keep going, full speed ahead. In this part, you’ll want to counter that impulse by teaching children strategies to fix their reading if and when they make mistakes. To plan for the unit, you’ll want to listen carefully as children read and study what they do when they encounter difficulty. This will help you align your students in small groups based on their needs.

As you assess and confer, you will notice that some readers are apt to ignore letters and sounds, while others are apt to ignore meaning. The goal is for readers to integrate all sources of information, drawing on letters and sounds, meaning, and sentence structure. During this part, you will want to prompt children to attend to the sources of information that they tend to ignore.

You may decide to present a series of minilessons that support using all three sources of information to cross-check whether one’s attempts are correct. You will also want to give lessons that encourage students to try more than one strategy. Being a flexible word solver, rather than a word solver who relies on just one set of strategies, is essential.

Gather children who most often use graphophonic cues (letters and sounds) to figure out words in a small group and teach them that they are relying on some muscles more than others. They might be really good at sounding out words but forget to think about the meaning of the story. Remind these children to make sure that any attempt at a word sounds like book language and makes sense with the story. So

when a child encounters the sentence *Okay, I can go now because the show is finished* and reads *finished* as *fished*, you'll want to prompt her by asking, "Does that make sense?" That is, you'll nudge children who are overrelying on letters and sounds to rely more on meaning. Rather than say, "Read through the word," or "Check the ending—does that look right?" or "Do you know other words that look like that one?" you will help these readers predict what the word could possibly be by thinking of the rest of the sentence. "What would make sense here?" would be a good prompt. "What would sound right?" would be equally good.

One of the trickier reading problems to help children deal with is relying too much on meaning while disregarding the graphophonic cues. In this case, the child's reading makes sense, yet the child is not reading the words accurately. This is even a difficult reading glitch for adults. You'll want to begin this work either in a conference with an individual or a small group by telling children about this issue and showing them examples of when they've made this sort of miscue. You might write a text like this on a chart paper: *At the concert, all the singers' fans sang happy birthday, and then afterward, her friends came to her house for her birthday party.* As you read it, you might miscue by reading *friends* as *fans*. This miscue makes textual sense and is a logical error, especially after the first *fans*, but it doesn't make true sense. When you read it, you might want to dramatize a pregnant pause: "Huh? All the fans came to her house? That would be tons of people. Let me check on that again." You'll want to teach your children to read carefully and quickly, not just one or the other.

Earlier, we suggested that if a child reads *finished* as *fished*, you need to prompt that child to consider meaning more. On the other hand, if that child has read *finished* as *over*, you'd want to prompt him to check the letters. You might say something like "Does that look right?" You definitely want to teach this reader that he needs to self-monitor, checking in with himself even when a word sounds right, confirming that what he just interpreted not only sounds right but also looks right.

## **Part Four: Readers Make Sure That We Don't Just Read the Words, We Understand Them—and Then We Read More and More**

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Because your children are now working hard to read many more unfamiliar words and phrases, you'll want to move to this fourth part in which you teach your children that figuring out these words is half the battle. The intention is to own the words by understanding what they mean. At this time of the year many second graders are in the beginning and transitional stages of reading and will encounter words and phrases they don't understand. As they progress along a gradient of difficulty, their books include a wider range of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions that may be unfamiliar or confusing. Too often they may simply let their eyes pass over these words without pausing for even a second to consider what the word or phrase means. Right away, teach your children that strong readers are curious about words and try our best always to understand what words and phrases mean. Discuss that one of the

fun jobs for readers is to collect words. You'll demonstrate how to read back and read ahead, using the context to figure out the word or phrase in question. You'll show them how they can replace unfamiliar vocabulary with synonyms to help them hold on to meaning. If a child gets stuck on the word *prized* in an excerpt like this—*Lily finally admitted to her mother that she was playing catch with the neighbor's dog when he ran through and ruined her prized rose bush*—you could teach that child to think about what would make sense and substitute a word. The child might say, "Hmm, it sounds like it must have been a special rose bush, so maybe it means something like special."

Then, you can teach toward independence in aspects of reading that are not on your front burner during this unit. For example, you won't be pushing stamina and volume as the subject of your minilessons. But you will definitely want to notice when children continue to care about reading a lot and when they push themselves to read more and more. You'll want to acknowledge that you are not even teaching those things, but that readers are coming up with these goals on their own, which is what grown-up readers do.

In that fashion, you can keep goals other than tackling tough words alive, including volume, stamina, fluency, reading in ways that allow a reader to retell a text, growing ideas when one reads and capturing them on Post-its or some other kind of paper, and having grand conversations about a book.

You will want your children to reread lots of passages. Rereading will help them figure out tricky words, smooth out their reading, and work on their parsing and phrasing so that their reading begins to sound more like talking.

You can teach children that while working on tricky parts in texts, they need to make sure they continue to comprehend and they can check themselves by retelling the texts to themselves at different points along the way. You'll want to remind your students that they can retell across their fingers by using cue words such as *first*, *then*, *next*, *after that*, and *finally*. According to the Common Core Standards, students should be able to retell stories and demonstrate understanding of characters, setting, and plot by the end of second grade. If students get stuck as they retell, you can teach strategies they can use to get back on track. For instance, you can teach them to touch each page and retell the big thing that is happening on each page ("Oh, yeah, this is the part when \_\_\_\_\_"). With texts that have lots of pictures, you can teach them to be resourceful and use the illustrations to remind them of the story.

## Ideas to Celebrate the Work of This Unit

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You may want to end this unit by telling readers that their muscles for dealing with hard parts in texts are probably much stronger now, so you are going to give each one of them a harder text. Children can read those texts aloud in a way that demonstrates all their methods for dealing with hard texts while listeners act as researchers, recording (or noting from a chart) some of the strategies they saw the reader using. You also could have readers pick one or two books that they worked through and practice

reading them aloud in their most beautiful read-aloud voice. They could highlight parts of the text that they had to figure out and tell their partner what strategies they used.

## Read-Alouds

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While teaching this unit, you will probably think about your read-aloud work as a counterbalance to the focus of the unit. You might bring charts about comprehension front and center while you read aloud, reminding children about the importance of using bookmarks to save one's place, of thinking back over what you have already read before reading forward, and of pushing yourself to read a bit more. You might use the read-aloud to remind children of the logs they began keeping during unit one and of the thinking they began doing about how much reading they're able to do in a day or a week.

Then, too, you'll probably want to be sure that your reading aloud works in alliance with your writing workshop to help children think about how stories tend to go and about making movies in their mind as they read (and write). We think it is really important that the writer, the storyteller, the reader, makes a movie in his or her mind. Your read-aloud can give students lots of practice envisioning. Many children will be reading chapter books now, and those books do not come with pictures already there (as picture books did). You can use this as the rallying cry to help you emphasize that readers need to make the picture in our mind's eye. You can also show children how you predict as you read. Predictions are, in a sense, envisionments of the future as readers imagine what will happen next. You might also consider discussing the author's purpose in writing the text. Children can discuss why the author wrote—the message or ideas she wants to convey—and explore how that purpose comes through in the writing. This will help children think about their own writing, and it aligns nicely with the Common Core State Standards.

The next unit focuses on getting to know the characters in a story in ways that help readers understand the story. To get ready for this unit, you may want to begin gathering baskets of books that feature particular characters, such as Poppleton, Henry and Mudge, Frog and Toad, Rex and Lily, Fly Guy, Junie B. Jones, Judy Moody, Mercy Watson, and others. You'll want to make sure you have character baskets that are at levels appropriate for the range of readers in your classroom. This will also be an opportunity for you to start reading some of these books aloud to your students, turning their focus to the effect that plot and setting often have on a character's wants and actions.

## Word Study

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You'll want to continue providing direct instruction in phonics this month. This unit of study supports students' transfer of word knowledge into their reading, but you will want to continue to build their knowledge of words this month during your twenty-minute

word study segments. Below are a few suggested lessons, based on features of spelling in which many second graders tend to need explicit instruction:

<b>If you decide to teach . . .</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Words Their Way</i>, 4th edition</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons, Grade 2</i> (Pinnell &amp; Fountas)</b>
Short and long vowels	6-1, 6-2 (pp. 188–189)	LS3, LS4 (pp. 79–86)
Long vowel spelling patterns	6-2, 6-4 to 6-15 (pp. 189–199)	SP3 to SP6 (pp. 173–188)
Consonant blends (e.g., <i>sc, cl</i> )	5-6 to 5-10 (pp. 157–159)	LS1 (pp. 71–74), LS5 (pp. 87–90) LS6 (pp. 91–94) (adapt to teach different consonant blends)
High-frequency words	pp. 182–183	HF1 to HF9 (pp. 235–270)

## One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

Now that your children are beginning to read level J/K/L books, take a look at your running records and conferring notes from unit one to figure out your students' particular needs. Chances are, one of their biggest challenges as readers—particularly English language learners—will be new vocabulary and unfamiliar words. If you begin this unit knowing that vocabulary and language are a big concern, you may want to adapt this plan to get to the vocabulary strategies sooner rather than later.

There is also a possibility that your class is beginning to read higher-level chapter books—books like *Junie B. Jones*, *Horrible Harry*, or the *Magic Tree House* series. If you have a number of readers reading books at level L or above, you will want to consider your assessments carefully to figure out what each student needs to work on to continue to move up. For example, you may want to adapt this unit to teach strategies for dealing with tricky parts of whole sentences and the structure of the text rather than word-level strategies. If your children are reading at these higher levels, you might also add a string of lessons dealing with idioms and expressions or how to follow jumps in the passage of time. Tricky parts like these would be more appropriate for transitional readers.

Alternatively, you may find that the strategies suggested below are just right for your students but that they can't seem to sustain their reading for very long each day. You will want to use your running records to help determine what word-solving strategies will best fit your class. You will also want to make sure that your students are incorporating what they are learning during your phonics/word study sessions. Make sure you tailor your minilessons to what your data show and the particular needs in your classroom. In this case, you may want to adapt the unit to include more

time for partners. You could structure your workshop so that children read privately first, then work with their partner for a few minutes, then go back to private time again. You might add a minute or two to private time each day, gradually building up your children's stamina and independence so that they can get to the goal of forty minutes of private reading by midyear.

## **Part One: Readers Notice and Tackle Tricky Parts: Chunking Parts of Words, Drawing on Meaning as Well as Phonics**

- "Readers are problem solvers. This means we notice and name the troubles we are having as we read. When we come across a hard word we don't just mumble over it—we try something. When that doesn't work, we try something else! Today I want to teach you that readers can break words into parts to help us solve problems. As we do this, we think about what the word could say and what's happening in the story to help us figure it out."
- "Today I want to teach you that readers can look at words and think about whether there are words we know inside the word that can help us to understand that new word."
  - *Example:* "If we see the word *tablecloth* we can think to ourselves, 'I have never seen this word before, but it has *table* at the beginning and *cloth* at the end, and I know what both of those words mean. Hmm. Maybe it means a cloth that you put on a table? I think I have seen that at a restaurant, maybe that is what this word is!'"
- "Today I want to teach you that readers can break up a word to help us problem-solve. We look at the first few letters of the word plus the vowel and then a letter or two after the vowel and try to use that running start in a word to help us figure it out."
- "Today I want to teach you that readers use what we know about letters and patterns from word study to help us read our books. We can look closely at words and say, 'Do any of these letters go together to make special sounds? Can I use those sounds to help me read?' "
  - *Tip:* "What we are really trying to do is carry our word work into reading workshop to help us read words."
- "Today I want to teach you that readers need to look all the way across words to help us read. We think about what would make sense and then look at the beginning, middle, and end of the word to figure it out."



- “Today I want to teach you that readers can think about what kind of word would make sense to help us figure out the tricky part. We might say to themselves, ‘This word needs to be a describing word because it comes before a thing.’ We can then use our thinking about the kind of word needed and what is happening in the story to help us take a try at reading the tricky word.”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers use words we know to help us read new words. If we see a word like *shopping* we can ask ourselves, ‘Do I know any words that can help me read this?’ Then we can say, ‘I know *show*, so I think the beginning will sound like /sh/ and I know *hop*, so that can help with the middle sound!’”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers pay close attention to endings to make sure our reading doesn’t just make sense but also looks right. We notice familiar endings like *-ing*, *-ed*, *-s*, and use them to help with our reading.”

## **Part Two: Readers Read Known Words in a Snap and Check to Make Sure New Words Make Sense**

- “Today I want to remind you that not every word is a trick word. We can read and when we see a ‘snap word’ we can read it in a snap. As readers read more and more books, for more and more minutes, we begin to build up a collection of words that we don’t need to work to figure out. Those words can just be read with ease and this frees our brain up to pay more attention to what a book means.”
- “Today I want to remind you to use what we are learning during word wall work to help read the words in our books that pop up again and again. One way to do this is by reading the word wall before we start to read each day so that our brain is on alert for these words and this can make it easier to read these words quickly.”
  - *Tip:* “These are words that should be ‘snap’ words for us, but are not. When you find a word like this, you can put it on a card and practice reading it—and other words you want to know—until you know it in a snap! You can keep all of these words on a word ring and read them quickly at the beginning and end of reading workshop to help you get faster and faster as you practice. You can even play games with your partner to practice these words.”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers use what we know about words to figure out a tricky word. We can use parts we know in words to help us. Before we read a word we can think about the word we are getting ready to read and ask

ourselves ‘What parts will I see at the beginning of the word? At the end of the word? In the middle of the word?’ ”

- *Example: “If I am getting ready to read this page about a little boy who just fell down and cried, I’m thinking I will see the *cr* at the beginning of the word and a /d/ sound at the end of the word. Now I’ll look at the word to see if that matches. If it doesn’t I can try again, still holding what I think the word will mean in my head to help me.”*

### **Part Three: Readers Fix Our Reading When We Make a Mistake**

- “Today I want to remind you that we can’t wait for someone else to check our words. As second-grade readers, we need to watch ourselves as we read. We have to be the kind of readers who always check on our own reading to know if it’s right. We can do this in three ways, with three questions. When we check our words we can ask ourselves, ‘Does this go with what is happening in the story? Does this sound like it would sound in a book? Do the letters I see match the sounds in the word I’m saying?’ ”
- “Today I want to remind you that readers can reread to make sure what we are reading is right. We can reread thinking about how the words we just read sound and ask ourselves, ‘Can I say it that way?’ For example, when I’m reading *Tom want into the store* I have to stop and ask myself, ‘Can I say it that way?’ No way! So I try something else: *Tom went into the store*. Can I say it that way? Yes I can! When readers notice something is not right we don’t just keep reading. We stop, we check it, and we try something else. One thing we can try is changing a word so that it sounds like how we, or people we hear in real life, would talk.”
- “Readers, we have been working to get through the hard parts and make sure that our reading makes sense. Today I want to remind you that especially when everything looks right and makes sense, we still need to reread to make our reading sound smooth. So we read, fix, and read again—putting it all back together!”

### **Part Four: Readers Make Sure That We Don’t Just Read the Words, We Understand Them—and Then We Read More and More**

- “Readers, you must know that readers are curious about words. We try our best always to understand what words and phrases mean. One of the fun jobs for readers is to collect words. Today I want to teach you that you can keep track of new and interesting words that you read by putting them on Post-its and sharing

them with your partner. When you're not sure what they mean, you can talk about them with your partner to try to figure them out."

- "Once we have noticed and collected new words, we need to go back to the page where we found that word and try to figure out what the new word means in that part of the text. Today I want to remind you that we can think about how the words might go on the page or what the words will say *before* we read. We ask ourselves, 'What's happening in the story? What will the words say?' before we read the words. The pictures can help too. We can look at the pictures carefully thinking about who is in the story and what is happening, to get us ready to read the words. When we do this, we can guess what a word will mean even when it looks tricky to read. We can substitute a word or group of words that makes sense in that place. Then we can use those words to help us figure out the meaning of the new word."
- "Today I want to remind you that we need to use every bit of information that a book gives us to help us figure out what new words mean. You can read back in your book and then read ahead, using the context to figure out the word or phrase in question. Then you can replace unfamiliar vocabulary with words you think might mean the same to help you hold on to meaning."
  - *Example:* "So, if you got stuck on the word *prized* in an excerpt that reads *Lily finally admitted to her mother that she was playing catch with the neighbor's dog when he ran through and ruined her prized rose bush*, you could think about what would make sense and substitute a word. Then you might say, 'Hmm, it sounds like it must have been a special rose bush, so maybe it means something like special.'"
  - *Tip:* "When readers use their own, different word for an unknown new word to keep meaning going, they then need to go back and collect the new word. So in the above example they might meet with their partner, show the place where they did the substituting and say, 'So *prized* probably means *special*.' They can then ask their partner, 'Does that make sense to you?'"
- "Today I want to teach you that even as we are working to figure out tricky words, we want to be sure to continue to build stamina and push ourselves to read more and more. We can look at our reading logs and set new goals for themselves."
  - *Tip:* "Readers can think, 'How much do I usually read during reading workshop or at home each day? Can I try to read even more today?' Then we set a goal for the amount of pages we'll read during reading time."
- "Today I want to teach you that readers can smooth out our reading and make it sound more like talking by going back to reread the phrase or sentence with

the new word in it. Readers know that to really learn a new word they must try to say the word in context. Saying the word soon after figuring it out will help us remember the word for a long time."

- "Today I want to remind you that while retelling a story, we can try to make sure to use the new words we've learned."
  - *Tip:* "Using new words often helps make sure that the new word is remembered."
- "Sometimes, while working to figure out an unknown word, readers can lose track of what is happening in the story. Today I want to remind you that we can then get our reading back on track by touching each page to retell the big parts of the story."
  - *Example:* "We can say things like, 'Okay, so this is the part when \_\_\_\_\_ and this is the part where \_\_\_\_\_.'"



## UNIT THREE

# Characters Face Bigger Challenges— and So Do Readers

### NOVEMBER

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: J/K/L)

By November of second grade the needy little kids you met the first few weeks of school are becoming more self-assured. Your students are no longer tugging on your sleeve every morning; they are no longer telling you about the cookie they know is waiting in their lunch box. They have moved on. Now when your students arrive, they come to you with big-kid voices saying, “There is a note in my folder today—I will be going home with Jake—just wanted you to know!” Or they pull you aside to share a troubling interaction with a friend, asking for your help but not wanting you to reveal to others that they needed it. Your second graders are moving out of little-kid land and into a whole new world—a world in which the problems are more about feelings than things and getting help from the teacher is not always cool. The good news is that the same thing is happening to the characters in the books they read, and reading can help them through some of it.

Yes, this is a character unit, in which, in alignment with the Common Core State Standards, you teach readers to pay close attention to characters as they read. While this will not be the only unit about character, but it the first and it will support the most foundational work. The character units that you will be teaching across second grade are mapped out and differentiated to build on an array of skills. Think of this as a unit that will help children retell well by determining importance in their increasingly longer texts. This unit will also include thinking about how characters respond to major events and challenges, as well as thinking about how characters feel throughout the twists and turns of the story. Glancing ahead, you’ll invite children to walk in the shoes of characters, role-play, empathize, and predict, while reading with

increasing fluency and intonation. Then you'll encourage children to look across texts and series to compare and contrast characters, deepening their ability to predict and synthesize. All of this work closely supports the goals of the Common Core State Standards. Specifically, it sets children up to be able to "describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges" and "acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud."

As you prepare for the unit and think about structures you'll put into place, keep in mind that readers who were assessed a few weeks ago could well be ready to move up to more challenging books already. Some of them will have entered the year rusty from a summer without reading but, after just a few weeks of reading up a storm, are ready to move up to another level of text difficulty. Because they'll be continuing to read fiction books this whole month, now is a good time to think about making those books more challenging, for those who are ready. You needn't do fancy running records on assessment passages to move kids up. Instead, ask them to read aloud bits of a leveled book and listen for fluency and accuracy, then talk to determine comprehension. If their speed at moving through books has increased, that, too, can be a sign that they're ready to move up. You will probably want to offer readers transitional book baggies containing some of the easier books at the next-higher text level and provide extra support as they read those harder books. Same-book partnerships help, as does a book introduction. If you or a parent can read some chapters aloud to the reader, this, too, will help. Before you begin, you will want to be aware of your students' various reading levels, being mindful of the particular challenges these new levels may pose. Many of your readers will be entering the K/L/M band of text difficulty. The books within this band tend to have some common features. You may decide to begin by introducing specific books matched to strategy lessons for readers embarking on this band. It may be useful to point out to students that they're reading books that will feel substantially different or harder and they need to be ready to work in new and challenging ways. Most important, whereas earlier books were often brief enough to be read in one sitting or were episodic, their books now will tend to be seventy-five pages with five or more chapters. Generally these books follow traditional story structure. They feature a single character with specific traits and wants, a character who encounters trouble but somehow finds a way to overcome and resolve that trouble. Understanding this story trajectory is an element of the Common Core State Standards.

Your guided reading can give readers a lot of power. In the K/L/M band, chapter books become more common and the themes in these narrative stories often require readers to understand concepts outside their own experience. Book introductions and strategy lessons will provide great support in helping children expand their understanding of new experiences, while also teaching children to recognize humor, absurdities, and innuendo. Early in a book, they will read with a watchful eye, considering, "What does the character *really* want?" Reading on, the character will encounter trouble and will have to work hard to reach his or her goal. You can help



your readers realize that the title and blurb on the back of the book are great comprehension tools, helping us grasp the overall storyline. Dialogue continues to carry a large part of the story and is often unassigned, requiring readers to follow verbal interactions among several characters. Strategy lessons and shared reading can help small groups follow the mood and tone of the story while at the same time keeping track of who is talking. Relationships tend to be static and the problem-solution arc is simple and literal. If the character wants a bike, the character gets a bike. Despite this simplicity, it will be important to help children consider how their characters respond to this trouble, what that response can teach us about the characters, and how the ending often holds a lesson for the characters and/or readers. While this is the nuts-and-bolts work of reading narrative, it will contain many new challenges for readers, who up until now have often read stories that did not show a character struggling with a real problem.

## Launching the Unit

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You might choose to launch this unit by helping your students see how much they have changed in the last few years. “Second graders,” you might say, “Do you remember when you were little and the thing you wanted most in the world was a lollipop or a pail and shovel? Back then you wanted little things, but now as you get older, you care about more important things—you want to be the best at your favorite sport, or you want to find a special friend, or you don’t want to do something that your parents tell you that you must do. Well, you know what? The characters in your books are growing up too! This month as you read, I want you to think closely about the characters in your books and the kinds of things they want and the kinds of trouble they have. You’ll find that your characters often have to work for stuff in these books. They don’t just want a piece of candy and then ask their parents and get it—that is the kind of simple story that little kids read. In the books you are reading now the character will want something and then he or she will try and try and work and work to get it—even when trouble gets in the way.”

Of course, there are many ways a unit of study on character could play out, and you will have choices to make as you plan and teach this unit. Your decisions will be influenced by the students in your classroom, your colleagues, and the materials available to you. But don’t forget your students spent a year in first grade studying characters, particularly character traits. You’ll want to build on these experiences rather than approach this unit as entirely new. We believe that this unit can focus on pulling together story elements and challenge students to study how characters respond to main events and get what they want or need in the end. The TCRWP has assembled a possible plan for this unit based on the way this unit has been taught in many teachers’ classrooms. The paragraphs below describe one version of this unit of study. Another resource available to you (via our website, [www.readingandwritingproject.com](http://www.readingandwritingproject.com)) is a unit of study entitled *A Journey Through*

Friendship: Good Times and Bad Times, by Laura Argento and Valerie Geschwind, former graduate students at Teachers College.

One more aspect to consider is partnerships. We have come to believe that students reading at level J and above (which will be most, if not all, of your class now) should be reading in same-book partnerships. While you will want these readers to choose most of their books on their own, one title each week can be chosen with the partner. This way the partners can support each other as they embark on their journeys with the characters. You will begin the unit by explaining that all characters take journeys and it is our job as readers to follow them through the text. Using Post-its to mark this thinking will help children prepare for their conversations with their partner and thus grow their understanding.

## **Part One: Getting to Know Our Characters' Wants and Troubles**

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At the beginning of the unit, your children will shop for just-right books, reading these books through the lens of story elements. Your minilessons will focus on strategies that will help your children read through such a lens, such as noticing setting, when the initial problem arises, and how the story moves through time. This will include teaching your students, as the Common Core State Standards suggest, to use information gained from the illustrations and words to demonstrate understanding of characters, setting, or plot and to describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

To begin, you might want to teach your children to determine who the main character is in the story and what he or she wants. In some stories, what the character wants is clearly stated, but in other stories the students will have to infer it. You can teach children to start this work by reading the title or the book and the blurb on the back. This will often help them find out what the character wants or the problem the character will face. Next you might teach students to notice what a character does early on in the story or the decisions she or he makes and ask, "Why is the character doing this?"

Once children have figured out what the main character wants, they can use that information to make predictions. You can teach them to put themselves in the character's shoes and ask, "What would I do next if I were this character?" Sometimes young readers hold on to these predictions without reading further to verify whether this prediction actually happened. You can teach children to revise their predictions as they read on and learn more information about how the character goes about getting what he or she wants or how he or she attempts to solve a problem. You can also teach children who are reading longer books to make predictions based on the patterns of behavior the characters tend to exhibit.

An important skill for second-grade readers is to accumulate information in the text across pages or chapters. You can teach children to read a few pages or a chapter and then stop and think about how the pages they've just read go together. Help

children learn to retell as they read, not just after finishing a book. You can teach them that one way to retell is to start with what the character wants and then to tell what the character did to try to achieve it. For example, students might say, “Iris is bored in the country—she wants something to do. First her father tries to play with her, then her mom tries, too. Finally she finds a tree house while she’s on a walk with her grandfather. That’s where she comes to meet Walter. And she and Walter find *lots* to do!” You can support children’s ability to retell by having them mark the character’s actions or decisions with a Post-it and jot a quick note. Then they can reread their Post-its and retell across them.

Your students can use these notes to talk about what they are noticing about their character as well as to retell the bigger actions of the book. If they are reading in same-book partnerships, partners can compare their observations and retellings and help each other with tricky parts. You will also want them to consider whether the character is changing over the course of the book. In fact, many books in the K/L/M band have characters who come to feel differently about important problems by the end of the book.

As you listen to partners talk about characters, you’ll want to teach in a way that lifts the level of their conversation, but you’ll also want to notice ways to support the form of the conversation. You’ll want to see whether your students are transferring the skills and strategies they’re learning during read-alouds into partner conversations during independent reading. If you’ve worked on getting your children to elaborate and clarify when necessary in whole-class conversations and request elaboration and clarification, you’ll want to see evidence that they’ve transferred these conversational moves into their book talks with their reading partner. This work will help your students strengthen the “collaborative conversations” the Common Core State Standards outline.

## Part Two: Readers Think about Characters’ Traits and Feelings

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Once your students are comfortably using the story elements and finding the problems in their books while tracking the actions of the main character as she or he works through those problems, you will want to deepen their reading work by asking students to think more closely about characters’ traits and feelings. While most books in the K/L/M band will clearly state a character’s traits, your readers will now need to read carefully for examples of when those traits are driving the character’s actions and when in fact the character begins to act outside those traits. For example, it is clear that Poppleton is a kind friend, so when he soaks Cherry Sue with a hose, we are *extra* surprised, because we know how out of character this action is for him. Many teachers choose to post and grow character trait charts, some borrowed from first-grade teachers, to remind children of all they know about traits from units in years past. This will help you push your kids to describe their characters in more specific and complex ways—calling a character *caring* rather than *nice*, or noticing more than one trait for

any given character. You may teach your readers that just as we prepare for reading by reading the blurb on a book and then predicting what the character's problem or trouble might be, we can also prepare by thinking about the character's traits and considering how those traits might play a role in the story. For example in the Fox series, the fact that we know that Fox can be full of himself will help us predict that he might get in trouble for boasting.

Perhaps more important, you will want to help your students look closely at characters' feelings. While most characters in books at these levels do not change their core traits—Mudge is a playful puppy at the beginning, middle, and end of any Henry and Mudge book—his *feelings* do change. At the beginning of the book in which he comes to live with Henry he is joyful, but then when he gets lost he feels lonely and worried. Still later, he becomes hopeful as he starts to find his way home, and at the end he is once again filled with joy. This kind of emotional roller coaster is typical of characters in books at these levels. Tracking characters' changing emotions is another way for readers to determine importance in their now lengthier books. You will want your readers to see that whenever a character is expressing a strong emotion—or changing how he or she feels—it is likely that something important is happening. Some teachers choose to show students that they can use their Post-its or reading notebooks to make an emotional timeline of the character's changing feelings. This can be lined up with the trouble Post-its they made earlier in the unit to help children think more clearly about how feelings and actions align in these books. Don't forget that all of this talk of character traits and feelings will only strengthen and be strengthened by the realistic fiction children will be writing simultaneously in writing workshop.

### Part Three: Readers Can Find Deeper Meanings in Our Books

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By now, your readers will be tuned into their characters like never before. They will be thinking about their characters' wants and troubles, they will be tracking their actions and feelings, and they will be holding on to longer texts with confidence. Now will be the perfect time to let your students know that we don't just read to learn about our characters—that in fact authors often write about characters to help us learn about the world and even ourselves. In this last part of the unit, you will want to push your readers to think about how characters can teach us about our own feelings and world. This work might start by simply asking readers to think about whether they agree or disagree with their characters' actions and reactions. You might challenge readers to talk to their partner and ask, "Why would this character do that?" or "Would I have behaved the same way?"

As students examine these questions, they can look more closely at certain parts of their texts. This will be an opportunity for readers to refer to parts of the text as evidence for thinking and ideas, so you will want to teach them how to find important passages and then how to talk long about those passages. One useful way for readers

to find meaningful passages in which important ideas are expressed is to look for places where a character has a big feeling or where his or her feeling changes. Another strategy is to examine passages where the character acted out of character. Since children will have started this work earlier in the unit, you will now want to show them that reading and rereading these parts can help reveal ideas and lessons. As readers discuss portions of the text together, they can read them out loud, thus increasing their fluency and changing their voices to match the new meanings they are discovering. This, too, is work outlined in the Common Core State Standards.

As you draw this unit to a close, reiterate that all the troubles and feelings that the characters work through can help students think about their own lives. You can push your students to reflect on how their characters' struggles and triumphs can influence the decisions the students make and actions they take.

## Word Study/Phonics/Shared Reading

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By now most second-grade teachers have set up small word-study groups that meet for twenty minutes every day. Typically you might see one group working on blends, one group working on vowel sounds, and another working on long vowel spelling patterns. Each day you will conduct lessons with a different group to introduce important concepts.

If you are doing word study with the whole class, you will want to look at your children's writing to determine what most children are ready to work on. You will want to work on introducing long vowel spelling patterns once children know short vowel spelling patterns and are beginning to use long vowel spelling patterns in their writing. It is also helpful to call children's attention to known spelling patterns during reading and writing to help them use this knowledge to solve words. For example, during whole-class shared reading you might select a text that contains spelling patterns already studied. While reading the text, stop at the spelling pattern and prompt kids to notice it by saying, "Do you see a part in this word we know?"

In addition to word study work, you will continue to conduct shared reading many times a week. By now your students will be comfortable with the shared reading routine and be ready to learn how to integrate all the sources of information. When planning shared reading, you will want to gather texts that you can use with students to support their word work. These may be big books (fiction and nonfiction), scripts, short texts, poems, songs, etc. They should be close to the levels that most of your students are reading and contain the spelling features you are working on, which you can enlarge by using a Smart Board, an overhead projector, or a document camera or by writing them on chart paper.

As you begin word work in shared reading, have students learn to search for information (meaning, syntax, and visual information) as you read the text. Initially, you may have students search for meaning and syntax before searching for visual information. This will support students in learning how to maintain meaning when they

encounter tricky parts. It will also support solving words that are not random but instead are related to the meaning of the text. You can do this by having the students read the text with you at a good pace. When they come to a tricky part in the text, have them search what's happening in the text, check the picture, reread the sentence to remind them of how the text sounds, and think about a word that would make sense and sound right.

You'll want to support solving different types of words during shared reading. Help students use what they have learned about compound words, onset and rime, and multisyllabic words. Teach students that when they encounter a compound word they should break it up into the two words that form the compound, put them back together, and make sure it makes sense with the story. Prompt students to also notice the onset (*bl*, *scr*, etc.) and the rime (*-oat*, *-eam*) in the word rather than saying each sound in isolation, which will slow them down.

To support your word study curriculum, below are a few suggested lessons, based on features of spelling in which many second graders tend to need explicit instruction:

<b>If you decide to teach . . .</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Words Their Way</i>, 4th edition</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons, Grade 2</i> (Pinnell &amp; Fountas)</b>
Short and long vowels	6-1, 6-2 (pp. 188–189)	LS3, LS4 (pp. 79–86)
Long vowel spelling patterns	6-2, 6-4 to 6-15 (pp. 189–199)	SP3 to SP6 (pp. 173–188) SP9 (pp. 197–200) SP11 (pp. 205–208) SP13 to SP15 (pp. 213–224) SP17 (pp. 229–232)
Consonant blends (e.g., <i>sc</i> , <i>cl</i> )	Adapt 4-27 to 4-31 (pp. 123–125) 5-6 to 5-10 (pp. 157–159)	LS1 (pp. 71–74), LS5 (pp. 87–90) LS6 (pp. 91–94) (adapt to teach different consonant blends)
High-frequency words	pp. 182–183	HF1 to HF9 (pp. 235–270)

## Suggestions for Celebration

There are lots of ways you could celebrate a unit of study on characters facing challenges. Because it's likely that your children studied characters in first grade, you might decide to let them come up with a celebration idea. You can set parameters around the celebration, such as making sure it is an opportunity for children to share what they've learned about their characters. You might have children create a simple timeline of a favorite character, how he or she approached a challenge and learned from it, and then retell the story. A low-key celebration would be to ask reading partners to introduce another pair of reading partners to their main character, the challenge she or he faced, and how she or he worked through it.



## One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

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By this time in the year many teachers have conducted at least one round of formal running records with each of their students. As you look over these assessments, jot a note or two about each child. Who had trouble inferring a character's feelings? Who had a tendency to retell every small detail instead of just the important parts of the text? Who needs support with reading dialogue with appropriate intonation and expression? Use this information to adapt the following plan accordingly. For example, if your running records tell you that the majority of your class needs support determining importance or summarizing the main parts of the text, you might adapt the following plan to include a string of lessons to support those needs. If you find that your class is well behind the benchmark for this time of year and the running records of your children show they need more work on solving words, you may decide to add a part to this unit that focuses not just on studying characters but also on solving words as texts become more complex.

The sequence below is one possible path you might choose as you head into this unit of study on character. Of course, there are many ways the unit could play out. We invite you to use your running records, book logs, conferring notes, and other sources of data to make wise decisions. The teaching points below are far from encompassing, nor are they set in stone. They are meant to help you imagine a possible pathway, one that will need detours and alternate pathways to the same end and that may branch out very differently.

### Part One: Getting to Know Our Characters' Wants and Troubles

- "Today I want to teach you that we can get to know the characters in a book well by paying attention to their wants and problems. We do this even as we get ready to read by looking at the title and the blurb on the back of the book and asking, 'What kind of problem will this character face?' or 'What does this character want?' We can then use our answers to these questions to help guide our observations and jottings as we read right from the very first page of the book."
- "Today I want to teach you that as we go forward in our reading of a book, we carry and build an understanding of who the characters are. In the beginning of our books we hold in our heads the information we learned from reading the blurb. As we read, we begin to add new information about the setting and characters' lives. We read on, expecting that soon, a problem will show up."
- "Today I want to teach you that while reading we make predictions about what will happen to a character. We often think about the problems that a character faces and ask, 'What would I do if I had this problem? How would I try to work it out or get what I want?' "

- ## Part Two: Readers Think about Characters' Traits and Feelings

- A CURRICULAR PLAN FOR THE READING WORKSHOP, GRADE 2, 2011–2012

- “Today I want to teach you another way to study your characters and stories. Readers don’t just think about the characters’ traits, we track their feelings too! We notice what they are feeling in the beginning, middle, and end of the book.”
  - ▮ *Example:* “While most of our characters do not change their core traits—Mudge is a playful puppy at the beginning, middle, and end of any Henry and Mudge book—his *feelings* do change. At the beginning of the book in which he comes to live with Henry he is joyful, but then when he gets lost he feels lonely and worried. Still later, he becomes hopeful as he starts to find his way home, and at the end he is once again filled with joy.”
  - ▮ *Tip:* “Readers can track this information jotting Post-its where we’re noticing character traits and lining them up to make a timeline or by creating a timeline in our reader’s notebook.”

### Part Three: Readers Can Find Deeper Meanings in Our Books

- “Today I want to teach you that when partners are reading and talking with each other, we don’t just talk about our thinking, we also listen carefully to each other and add on to or raise questions about what our partner said.”
  - ▮ *Tip:* “Partners always want to know why characters do things. When we talk with our partners, we might ask them, ‘Why would?’ or ‘Why did?’ or ‘Would you?’ to push our partnership to have some new thinking about the characters’ actions.”
- “Today I want to teach you how readers grow big ideas in our books. One way that readers do this is to use those feelings that we have been noticing in our books to help us think about the bigger ideas that the story is showing or teaching us.”
  - ▮ *Tip:* “We can notice whenever a character is expressing a strong emotion—or changing how she feels—and then ask ourselves, ‘Is something big happening here?’ This will help us find the important parts of our books, read those parts more carefully, and talk about those parts with our reading partners. Talking about the important parts in our books can help us talk about big ideas in our books.”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers prepare for their partner. As they read they jot notes that they will look over and compare. We gather up our thoughts before we meet with our partner.”
  - ▮ *Tip:* “Readers can track characters’ feelings and traits on Post-its and then lay those Post-its next to the actions on our ‘trouble’ Post-its. This will help us think and talk about how feelings and actions line up in our books.”

- “Today I want to teach you that readers get ready for conversations with our partner and look for many things to talk about. We can think about how two ideas we have on Post-its fit together, we can think about why or how the information we have gathered is important to the story, and/or we can also think about our own opinions about what the characters did or behaved.”
  - *Tip:* “We can tell our partner that we like what our character is doing, or that we are shocked by our character. We say why we feel that way, too.”
- “One thing readers expect is that characters might be different at the end of the story than they were at the beginning. Today I want to teach you that when we read, we want to catch the changes and think, ‘Hmm, what’s different now? What is changing and why?’ ”
  - *Tip:* “You may want to mark these parts on a Post-it. Readers often jot a quick note about why a character is changing or why this is important to the story. Then we can look at Post-its from the beginning, middle, and end of our book and compare them.”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers not only learn about characters, we learn *from* characters, too! As we come to the end of a book, we can ask ourselves, ‘Did this character learn something that I could use to help me think about my life?’ ”



## UNIT FOUR

# Reading Nonfiction, Reading the World

### DECEMBER

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: J/K/L)

A new month usually means an overhaul of your classroom library that corresponds to the new genre you're teaching. Since you are beginning a month of teaching the strategies of nonfiction reading, the Common Core State Standards expect your children to be surrounded by nonfiction texts. You'll choose subjects on which there are many accessible children's books available and which are of high interest (though you can talk up almost any subject so children want to read more). For example, second-grade teachers have had baskets of books about wolves; spiders; snakes; tornadoes and hurricanes; planets; polar bears; dogs; cats; big cats; horses. You'll notice the emphasis on animals, planets, weather. That's because many young readers already know *something* about these subjects and are eager to know more. Because nonfiction readers attach their new learning to what they already know, starting with some subjects with which your very young readers are a tiny bit familiar will be very helpful to them.

### Setting Up the Nonfiction Library: Allowing Readers to Sift and Sort

Your nonfiction library will also need to contain many levels of books, including plenty that are easier than the average reading level of your students. Some people recommend that children read a level or two below their regular level when they read nonfiction texts. (For example, if a child is able to read level L fiction books with fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, you may ask him to shop for nonfiction books

around level K or J.) Others believe that the lower-level books (below J) are often more accurately leveled than higher-level books and that students reading these lower levels can read both fiction and nonfiction at the same level. Think about your leveled library and your readers. Listen to your kids read nonfiction books at their level. If they are struggling, drop them down a level or two. Other readers may be able to handle nonfiction texts at their just-right fiction level. In any case, your primary concern must be that the nonfiction books in your readers' hands are ones they can read with ease and interest from start to finish. You certainly don't want kids thumbing randomly through too-difficult books just to glance at the lush pictures they contain, nor do you want them zooming through books that feel too babyish to challenge them. You will want to reteach book-choosing strategies that you taught earlier in the year, now that the genre is different. Remind children to hold up a finger each time they encounter a hard word, and if they encounter more than three per page, to reconsider the book they've picked. Remind them also to try reading a paragraph to check whether it feels too hard or too easy before settling down with any book.

To immerse your students in this new genre completely, you need a rich variety of nonfiction books that will sustain your various levels of readers. You'll also want books that offer examples of the nonfiction text features highlighted in the Common Core State Standards, so go for illustrated texts, books with labeled diagrams, gorgeous photographs, a table of contents, an index, headings and subheadings, tables and charts, text sidebars and information boxes. The Common Core State Standards suggest that second graders should not only read informational texts but also read across the disciplines—social studies and history as well as science—so you will want to make sure that your library and choices of materials include a range of topics. Get books by trading baskets with other second-grade teachers, by visiting your school library, by asking families to donate any nonfiction their children have outgrown, and by visiting your public library. Remember what Dick Allington has shown again and again—kids teach themselves a lot about reading when they find books fascinating! It is impossible to teach a child to be a skilled and avid reader using books that are too hard or too dull.

As you collect these books, do your best to identify each one's level and then write the level on the book's cover. Place the books you select neatly in cartons but resist the urge to sort them by topic or level just yet. Keep their exciting covers and features hidden from view until the first day of the unit, when you'll hand the cartons over to your *students* to sort and create a new nonfiction library.

More than two decades ago, researchers found that when a child is roughly two years old, he or she will separate boxes and balls and make a distinct pile for each—the child demonstrates an active sorting behavior. Roughly at this same time, his or her vocabulary shoots from a *couple* of words to more than fifty. Scientists have since then discovered that the ability to sort, or categorize, objects is connected with the ability to name them. As they grow older, children continue to sort the items in their world: the food on their plates (yummy green peas versus yucky yellow potatoes), the toys in their closet (sleek racing cars versus chunky construction trucks), and the people



they meet (friendly, nice-smelling neighbor versus scary stranger). They do this as a way of clarifying preferences and making meaning of their world. To sort an object into a category requires studying and understanding the object on some level, developing an idea of what it is, and yes, *naming* it. Your second graders will, no doubt, have their own sorting instincts—for stamps or sports shoes or Silly Bandz, perhaps, or for the friends and teachers in their lives. To start off this unit, you will issue the invitation that students sort through several cartons of new nonfiction books placed in a corner of your room. You'll have a few shelves and book baskets or bins ready for them to fill. Turn the reins over to your children: "We're going to start a new unit this month and for this new unit, we have all kinds of exciting new books. Here they are! They're just sitting here, waiting, in these cartons. And guess what? *You* guys need to pluck them out of there and set them up in *your* nonfiction library."

Before mayhem erupts, however, set children up for the sorting task ahead of them. "Remember, librarians don't just toss books into baskets and shelves any old way. Think like a librarian, like a person who is an expert on *types* of books. What are some categories according to which we might organize these nonfiction books?" This, of course, is a point at which your students' knowledge about the types, genres, and authors of books will be revealed. Some might suggest organizing by author, others by genre, level, or topic. Take these suggestions, write them on a chart, perhaps adding one or two of your own in case students fail to mention them so that your chart looks something like this:

Librarians organize books by:

- Author
- Subject
- Informational or Story
- Level

You might say to children, "If we organize our library by the topics we have and we know the level of each book, then we can select books more easily." To rouse their interest you might add, "Oh! I didn't even know we had books about mountains! I want to read about that!" Or you might say, "I want to find out more about wolves, so I'll look in the mammal basket." That is, you'll want to convey to children that they should consider two factors as they organize the library: it should help readers find their materials quickly *and* it should inspire readers to explore new topics. Organize the sorting activity by breaking it down—make groups of three or four and hand each group a carton to sort. Once this is done, invite two groups to merge and re-sort their combined collection, this time by topic. Finally, give the whole class empty "topic baskets" to place books into and attach cards to on which they've written the topic the basket deals with.

If you give the control and ownership of the nonfiction library to your kids from the start, you probably won't have to spend as much time selling this or that new book—all books will already have passed through every child's hands and perhaps been briefly opened and scanned as they've sorted them. This categorization process may feel like a big game, but it fulfills the same purpose that sorting boxes and balls did at age two. As they study and categorize these books, children will make some personal sense of this new genre and acquire a new mental language for it. As they scan new books to sort—one cover featuring a glowing planet, another featuring the glowing filament of a lightbulb—children will develop their own curiosity and enthusiasm about the content of this library.

## **Part One: Nonfiction Readers Read to Become Smarter about Our World and the Things in It**

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To create a drumroll around this unit, let the children know what makes nonfiction reading special and unique—why you are so excited to be starting a new month of this kind of work. “We read nonfiction to get so much smarter about the wonderful and terrific things that happen in our world and to then teach what we learn to others,” you might say. “Here we are, sitting in this classroom, but our nonfiction books will take us to the bottom of an ocean and show us what the fish down there are doing. Or into the cocoon of a caterpillar to show us how delicate butterfly wings are forming.” Demonstrate the wonder and excitement of nonfiction reading. “You know how all of us have questions about the world? We wonder how electricity works or what it's like on a different planet—and the answers to all our musings about the world are to be found in *nonfiction!*” You'll want to maintain this wonder throughout the month, taking care to marvel alongside your students when they show you an illustration of the widest tree trunk on earth or tell you all they've learned about the rain forest.

At the outset, you will want to teach children the most basic, non-negotiable skills that all readers use to make sense of nonfiction texts. It is a good idea to begin by starting off the unit teaching previewing strategies. “Just as explorers study the lay of the land before they travel through it,” you might say, “readers study the lay of the land of our nonfiction texts before we begin reading them. There is a way that information is laid out in these pages. When nonfiction readers open a book, we study this layout to warm up for the reading ahead, to figure out what the text is going to teach.”

Now is a good time to open up a few of the books your kids have just finished sorting to point out the text features that help readers make sense of how information is organized within the pages. From their science and social studies classes and their nonfiction reading and writing in grade 1, children will already know that these books have new kinds of features, ones that they don't see in fiction stories. Such text features include the table of contents; the index; a glossary; headings and subheadings;

text sidebars and italicized or boxed subnotes; and labeled diagrams, tables, and charts. Remember that the Common Core State Standards call for children to “know and use text features to locate key facts and information,” so you’ll want children to begin using these features to decipher the organizational structures of their books.

Be careful not to let the study of text features consume too much time and space in your workshop—a day is sufficient. In too many classrooms we see well-meaning teachers teaching text features with so much gusto that children open up a book, study the text features, close it, and move on to the next book without reading the content! This defeats the purpose of previewing. Also, not all children’s nonfiction texts have every feature. Some will not have headings or boldfaced words. You will want to teach kids reading skills such as previewing, prediction, finding the main topic, and envisioning and show them how text features and other strategies can help them draw on these skills to understand their texts better. Fairly quickly, then, you will want to move children toward reading their books, all the while keeping an eye on how the features keep them oriented to how this content is organized or where it is leading. One way to do this is to have your students read the content on a page and then check to see how this aligns with the heading on that page. For example, once they read a page that talks about blue whales, humpback whales, and orcas, alert them to the heading that marks the start of this text—Types of Whales.

Once kids have internalized the routine of setting themselves up to read and retelling what their texts are about, you will help them dive into the work of actively reading the content. Your goal is to get children reading nonfiction texts with fluency and intonation. You’ll teach them that nonfiction readers read informational texts differently than we read stories, in part because the voice in our heads is different when we read nonfiction. Whereas stories have a story voice, nonfiction texts have the voice of a teacher or of the narrator of a documentary. You might add that when reading nonfiction texts, we’re always aware of what’s important and what’s less important, and as we read we use the voice in our head to pop out the big, important information in our book. To make this point, you could launch the unit by playing a tiny video clip from *Unleashed*, a Discovery channel show narrated by the animal enthusiast Jeff Corwin. You would point out that Corwin uses different voices to pop out important information. You would prompt children to listen for when Corwin uses a questioning, surprised, hushed, or dramatic voice and help them notice his use of the dramatic pause as well. Children can practice reading aloud to a partner a section or chunk of expository text with intonation that conveys the meaning.

After you’ve done the introductory work of pointing out all the ways and features that make nonfiction reading unique, you’ll sink into the real work of this part—helping children read longer stretches of nonfiction text with engagement. To do this, young readers need to learn strategies designed to help them constantly monitor for meaning. You might want to set up temporary partnerships for the next few lessons, so that for a short time each day readers are accountable for retelling whatever they’ve read to a partner. Partners can help each other hold on to meaning by asking, “What does that really mean? Can you give an example of that information?” The

promise of audience, attention, and input from a peer will do wonders to make children hold on to meaning more conscientiously and provide that much more sticking power to your teaching on monitoring for meaning.

The anchor standards in the Common Core State Standards emphasize that second graders need to be able to analyze how specific sentences and paragraphs and larger portions of text relate to one another and to the whole. “When reading nonfiction we don’t just roar on, tearing through the text at the speed of a Ferrari,” you might say to start this work. “We pause quickly and often to collect our understanding. We think, ‘What have we learned so far?’ or ‘What was this part about?’ and hold this information in our mind as we move forward in the book.” Of course, when readers stop to recollect what we’ve just read, we are likely to be more mindful, also, of what ought to come next. Teach your second-grade readers to anticipate the text that should follow the part they have just finished reading. You may tuck demonstrations of this anticipation into your read-alouds: “This part told me about the types of whales,” you may say thoughtfully. “Next, I will probably learn something *new* about whales, maybe what whales like to eat or facts about whale families and their babies.”

Children need to learn to categorize text into sections to make sense of the sections, and you can teach children how to make mental containers as they read and drop the information they learn into the various categories. “You just sorted a few hodgepodge cartoons into an organized library,” you might remind them, “putting each book into a special basket—a container—depending on what it was about. You can do the same thing when you read text. Ask, ‘What was this bit of text about?’ and make a mental container. For example, when reading a book about squirrels, you may read a couple pages and make the mental containers *what squirrels look like* and *how squirrels hunt for food*. When you read on, you may decide, ‘Oh, this taught me that squirrels use their claws to hold onto food while they eat it—that goes in *how squirrels hunt for food*. And I learned that squirrels’ tails are half as long as a grown man’s arm—that teaches me more about what squirrels look like, so that goes in *what squirrels look like*.’ ” Teach children that sometimes we create the categories or mental containers, and at other times the headings or subheadings do this for us. When a text provides a broad heading for a large chunk of text, you might ask partners to work together to figure out various subheadings that may be inserted into the chunk.

To extend this work on categorizing, you might teach children the phrase, “This picture [this page] shows \_\_\_\_\_ and that goes with \_\_\_\_\_.” In addition, you’ll want to teach your readers that sometimes they learn something later in the book that sends them back to reread an earlier part to sort and categorize the book with that new information in mind. For example, a reader might discover later in a book that some insects have wings while others do not. After discovering this, the child might decide to look again at all of the pictures in the book that show insects and make a list of insects with wings and those without wings. Partners can share with each other how they have sorted their book into categories. You might teach them to introduce books to each other by saying, “This is a book about squirrels and it teaches about what they look like, where they live, what they eat, and how they hunt for food.”

It will certainly be helpful to teach kids to add (by muttering under their breath) transitional words that seem as though they belong in a text. That is, imagine a text says: “You need many ingredients to make scrambled eggs. You need eggs, milk, cheese.” A skilled reader essentially reads such a text, thinking, “You need many ingredients to make scrambled eggs. *For one thing*, you need eggs. *Then, too*, you need milk. You *also* need cheese.” It may help if children, for a little while at the start of this unit, became accustomed to adding transitional words into their books as they read them. For example, children can add *or*, *and*, *however*, or *but*. They might add phrases to create a list where one doesn’t exist: *one kind*, *another kind*, *the last kind*. These transitional words help children mentally demarcate chunks or sections of text. You’ll want your readers to use these transitional words as they retell to their partner—not because it will make for smoother retellings (which of course it does) but because these transitional words are important dividers of information, helping children sort whatever they want to retell into categories. You’ll want to put up charts of helpful transitional words and instances when readers might use them around the room and remind your readers to use them during partner talk.

Even though this work of chunking and categorizing texts into mental topic containers is important for nonfiction reading, you want to proceed with caution. Remember: the bigger work of nonfiction reading is to “become smarter about our world and the things in it.” Resist the urge, therefore, to overteach these skills simply because they are featured on high-stakes tests. The bigger work that your children are doing continues to be that of immersing themselves in the wonder of how whales communicate, how rain is formed, or how the cocoa bean becomes a Hershey bar. It is important to remember that the skills we teach, no matter how crucial, are mere *tools* to facilitate the bigger work of allowing children to enjoy and become hooked on nonfiction texts. The good news is that this larger focus will enable the smaller skills to become natural, automatic, second nature.

## Part Two: Nonfiction Readers See More Than the Text on the Page

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Once you’ve set your readers up to do the basic work of monitoring long stretches of nonfiction text for meaning and read with engagement, you can graduate to making children more sophisticated nonfiction readers. Specifically, you’ll want to show them that good nonfiction readers don’t just do the obvious work of taking in the words on the page, that there are strategies for making meaning beyond what is explicitly written. In other words, you’ll nudge readers to respond to illustrations and, of course, to content. The Common Core State Standards emphasize that second-grade readers should be able to synthesize and analyze a text’s pictures, charts, and other graphics.

Once children move up reading levels in fiction and successfully begin series or chapter books, their reliance on visuals and illustrations gradually diminishes. This won’t happen as fast with nonfiction texts. The photographed close-ups, detailed drawings, or labeled diagrams in nonfiction books do more than just support or

extend meaning. Many pictures in nonfiction convey meaning in their own right and can stand independently. Text explaining an idea might be secondary to an illustration. Texts explaining the life cycle of a tadpole or the parts of a flower, for example, are scarcely adequate without the accompanying labeled diagrams. Similarly, children cannot be expected to accurately visualize unfamiliar environments such as outer space or oceanic ecosystems on the basis of textual description alone. Nonfiction is a precise genre, *not* one in which authors may leave things to the reader's imagination. Consequently, the illustrations in nonfiction texts often serve a precise informational function: to clarify text or to provide their own informational content on a topic.

Teaching students to “read” the illustrations in nonfiction, therefore, is important, and you’ll want to begin this work early. “Nonfiction readers look hard at the pictures in our books,” you’ll want to tell children. “We ask, ‘What is this picture teaching me about the topic?’” Teach children to make active connections between texts and pictures: “Nonfiction readers look at the pictures in our book and search for the words on the page that explain this picture, and we read these words closely, then look at the picture again to understand it better.” This is important to emphasize, because you certainly don’t want your second graders to be looking at pictures and not reading any words! Tell them, “If after searching, we find that the page *doesn’t* have words to explain the picture, we might think up some words of our own. We’d ask, ‘If I had to describe this picture to a friend, what parts would I think are important to explain first?’ and especially, ‘How would I connect the picture with what I’ve read on that page?’”

Looking at illustrations as a way to extend the words on the page can be the start of an entirely new way of looking at books. You want your readers to understand that nonfiction readers do more than just read the words on the page, we actively co-construct meaning by *responding* to the text. “Reading is not a one-way highway,” you might announce. “It’s not just that the words fly off the page and through the eyes, enter our brain, and that’s it. Once they get in here [point to your head] they stir things up. They get all the other stuff in our brains *moving*. They make us have questions, new ideas, they remind us of *other* things we’ve read and seen. When our brain takes words in, it spurts out ideas and questions!” In a nutshell, you’ll have taught your second graders Rosenblatt’s reader-response theory.

Of course you’ll want to show your students *how* readers might respond to texts—the best way to do this is to insert a think-aloud into your read-aloud. That is, as you read nonfiction text aloud, you’ll want to pause and, in a thinking voice, say aloud the tangential thoughts the text is evoking. You’ll want to extend this teaching point by saying, “Good nonfiction readers pay attention to all these questions and ideas that our brain has as we read.” That is, you’ll want children to catch the thoughts and ideas that reading evokes and either say them aloud to a partner or jot them down quickly for future conversations or inquiry. Teach children that they can connect what they read on the page with what they’ve read previously in the same book or in another book or encountered in real life. (For instance, a child might come across a



book on rabbits and decide that rabbits have a lot in common with the pet guinea pig he or she has at home—this child might then make a note of this and jot the similarities.) Teach them also that they might ask questions of the text and jot them down. (For instance, “Could I keep a rabbit in the same cage that currently houses a guinea pig, since they eat the same foods?”) You’ll want to get your readers into the habit of quickly jotting responses to text either on Post-its or on a minipad.

You’ll want to watch out for readers who pick up random facts from the text and recopy them as “responses.” If a Post-it reads, “Some olive trees grow to be 1500 years old,” or “Dogs are descendants of wolves,” you’ll want to clearly teach children the difference between mining nonfiction for trivia versus thinking and responding. To help readers develop original responses you might teach thought prompts such as:

- This makes me think. . . .
- This is just like. . . .
- This makes me wonder. . . .
- This surprises me because. . . .

You’ll show children the difference between trivia picked out from the text (*dogs are descendants of wolves*) and an original response to the text (*because dogs are descendants of wolves, I wonder whether a wolf brought up in a human home, away from the wild, might behave like a friendly dog instead of a ferocious beast*).

### Part Three: Nonfiction Readers Tackle Tricky Words in Our Books

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Before moving readers into the final part of the unit, you’ll definitely want to spend a day or two teaching word study and active decoding strategies. Many words will be automatic to second-grade readers as they recognize sight words and words that appear in their fiction reading. One unique aspect to nonfiction reading, though, is that they will also encounter words unique to the content they’re learning. And these words are of utmost importance, because they put names to the concepts and objects and parts of their topic of study. It is essential, then, that you teach young readers to be able to tackle these kinds of tricky words. How do they handle the word *proboscis*, for example? Perhaps you will tell kids that learning from a nonfiction text means being able not only to decode but also to understand key words—that in middle school when teachers want to test kids about what they’ve read in informational books, they ask such questions as, “Do you know what *proboscis* means?” If readers are going to read these nonfiction texts aloud to each other, they will definitely want some ways to tackle the hard words so they aren’t stopped in their tracks.

You will want to remind your readers to draw on all they have already learned to understand a new concept. Readers can read around words they don't know and ask themselves, "What word would sound right here? What kinds of words would make sense?" Model for children how when you come to an unknown word, you make a big deal out of wanting to know not only *how it's pronounced* but also how to *make sense of it*. For example, a reader encountering this passage—"A coral snake is full of poison. Its bright colors warn predators to stay away."—can read beyond the word *predator*, then stop and think about what type of word would sound right. "Would it be a word that means a thing? Could I substitute a word like *people*, or *others* or *animals*? Are those the types of words that sound right?" Then the reader could follow up to be sure she or he is cross-checking, monitoring for meaning, and taking a stab at saying the word the way it looks.

You will teach your students that readers also check the pictures in a book to see whether an unknown word is used in the label. If it is, we can study the picture and use words to describe what we are seeing. Take *proboscis*, for example. Looking at a photo of one, we see that it's thin and very pointy. It's by the moth's mouth. It looks like it is in the flower. So a proboscis is like a straw. That is, instead of simply saying, "I don't know that word, help me," readers can think through what a tricky word is apt to mean. Even if they can't pronounce *proboscis*, children will know how to think about its importance. You'll encourage children to do their best to pronounce any new vocabulary they encounter, and you'll also want them to try to figure out what the word might mean. Some teachers find it helps to show children that they can add a Post-it beside the tricky word, signifying that this is a place where some help from a partner might be good. Of course, kids need not rely on partners to figure out what tricky words mean, they can rely on themselves, too—by substituting synonyms in place of the word in the sentence, readers can try on different possible meanings. The text features of nonfiction texts—labels, arrows, close-up pictures, captions, and glossaries—can all be used to figure out unknown vocabulary.

## **Part Four: Nonfiction Readers Can Read More Than One Book about a Topic to Compare and Contrast**

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The final part of this unit needs to serve a dual purpose. It needs to build on the preceding, deepening, and intensifying earlier teaching. At the same time, it *also* needs to be a living reminder to children that the real purpose of nonfiction is to grow smarter about our world and the things in it. To achieve these ends, you might create text sets around topics that have proved especially popular during the past weeks and set up a book club around each topic. One of the most important standards in the Common Core State Standards asks that students work on the skill of comparing and contrasting information, as well as become proficient in presenting information orally. Club work helps children work on both these skills. Arming each club with a text set on a particular topic, you'll encourage the collaborative study of many texts on a topic, so

that children may compare and contrast the information and illustrations within them. You'll aim also for book clubs to grow conversations from their collective study of a topic. As a grand finale, each club might produce a poster or big book page displaying all they've learned from reading about their topic.

Since this is the first time that your kids will be working in clubs, you will want to start by teaching what Kathy Collins refers to in *Reading for Real* as "cooperation"—the first phase of book club talk. This will encompass the habits and protocols that make for effective club membership. Throughout this part, you will want to teach *cooperation with partners* and *cooperation in conversation*. For example, you might find it useful to teach children the expectations for club reading time and introduce a repertoire of ways to work together to self-manage their partnerships. You might teach children to use courteous conversation behaviors, to take turns while talking, to be helpful speakers, to be active listeners ("listening with your eyes, your ears, and your bodies"), to come prepared to work, and so forth. Encourage clubs to choose a name for themselves and to create and maintain a club folder as a container for their Post-its, ideas, and collaborative work. You may decide to create reading clubs by combining two partnerships at the same reading level. You want club members to be matched with the books they'll be reading.

If the contents of your nonfiction library permit, you will want clubs to choose a nonfiction topic rather than be assigned one. You might have clubs shop the library for their topic and then gather all the texts that deal with this topic. However, if your library has a limited range of books, you might study the titles you do have and create a list of feasible topics for clubs to choose from. (If supplies are particularly short, you might share materials with other first-, second-, and third-grade teachers.) Remember that your aim is *not* to initiate a topic or content study but rather to make your second graders better nonfiction readers. Even though it may seem to students that they're studying content on a topic (and they are), your instructional focus must be to develop students' skills at *reading this genre*—informational texts. Make sure that your teaching reinforces this. You won't be sitting with a club asking, "Which is the world's longest river? Name the cities that are located along this river," but instead, "Nonfiction readers decide what parts about a topic they want to read more closely. Can you guys, as a club, come up with three different things you want to study about rivers? You decide." Indeed, *children* ought to be deciding (as much as possible) what to read within reading workshop. You will merely be helping them use and understand the genre's mechanics so that their decisions are powerful.

Throughout your room, students should be starting to talk about their club topics. Before this talk starts going in too many directions, you might ask them to identify the big categories on which they want to focus. A club studying mammals, for example, might decide they want to know "where mammals live" and "what makes mammals different from reptiles," rather than looking at every aspect of mammals that their books discuss. You might urge readers to look at topic headings in the various books to see which ones overlap and which are unique to certain books before they decide.

Once clubs identify the two or three categories they want to study about a topic, they can compare how books differ in their treatment of these categories. Conversation might sound like this: “In my book, mammals live in forests. Can mammals really live in the ocean?” “Mine is a whale, and I read that they live in the ocean.” “So what is the same about where they live?” “It seems that most of them. . . .” Children might compare illustrations between books, finding ones that contain more labels or information. Or they might find an illustration in one book that is better explained by the text in another book. Essentially, your readers will be comparing and contrasting the books in their text set. To develop language that will set your readers up for comparing and contrasting, you might chart the following prompts:

- On this page [in this book] \_\_\_\_\_, but on this page [in this book] \_\_\_\_\_.
- The difference between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.
- What’s the same about these two \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.
- Unlike the \_\_\_\_\_ in this book the \_\_\_\_\_ does [doesn’t] \_\_\_\_\_.

Once club members are actively comparing and contrasting various texts, you’ll realize that there are plenty of potential teaching opportunities to be gleaned from this work. You might teach clubs that reading across texts allows us to construct a cumulative understanding, to develop schemas on a topic that borrow and build from many sources. “Different books can teach us different things about the same topic,” you might say. “Once nonfiction readers read our second and third book on a topic, we can mix and match information from all these books to make our own notes.” You’ll need to demonstrate to children how they might mix and match information from several books. For example, you might hold up two texts on polar animals and say: “These are books about polar animals. Both of them books tell me how animals that live in snow and ice keep warm. This first one says: “Some have thick fur. Some have fluffy feathers. Some are big and fat.” This second book has all these pictures of Arctic animals, with little descriptions underneath. Here’s a picture of the caribou and underneath, it says, “The Caribou’s fur is made of soft, hollow hair to keep it warm.” And here, underneath the picture of the whale and the seal, it says both these animals “have fatty tissue called *blubber* to keep them warm.” Now watch! I can mix and match the information in the two books to get a more detailed understanding. Using information from the first book, I’ll say to myself, ‘Some polar animals have thick fur,’ and from the second book, I’ll add the example, ‘such as the Caribou and the Arctic Fox.’ Similarly, from the first book, I’ll know, ‘Some polar animals are big and fat,’ and from the second book, I’ll add, ‘such as seals and whales. Their fat is called *blubber*.’ So

I get part of my information from here [hold up the first book] and another part from here [hold up the second book]." You will want your young readers to build information by mixing and matching content from several books, and you'll want them to do this while reading alone as well as while working collaboratively with help from club members. You might ask clubs to jot this accumulated information on Post-its or note paper and to keep these notes safe in their club folder.

Of course, comparing and making notes will feel somewhat meaningless and empty unless there is some sense of purpose or project driving it. In *Time for Meaning*, Randy Bomer writes, "I always read with a sense of project. . . . I'm always getting ready for some conversation that's yet to come, putting an anchor down at some point in the future and dragging my life's thought and energy toward that future." The anchor in this unit will be the final celebration or small project that will mark the culmination of this unit of study and pull your children's thoughts and energies toward it. In this case, you could steer clubs into making a poster or big book page that documents all their learning (the products of their conversations and notes) on a topic. They shouldn't spend much time preparing for this—the point isn't a huge project. Rather, the idea is for them to show their process of discovering information. You might want to open up some possibilities for how kids might capture their learning based on what they've already learned. Some clubs might display the question they posed alongside open pages of the books that helped them answer it. Others might have made a chart during the unit that they can now share. Others might choose to give an oral presentation. Some might share diagrams that helped them answer the questions they posed. No matter what information clubs decide to present (either to other clubs or to another class), the children will want to use their explaining voice as they do so.

## Word Study/Phonics/Shared Reading

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If you reassessed your students' phonics knowledge, chances are there are some concepts you will need to review at this point. If up until now you have been doing mostly whole-group work, you might shift to small-group word study to meet the needs of all your students. For example, based on your assessments, you may have noticed that some students still need to work on some of the concepts you introduced in the previous months, such as *r*-controlled vowels and long vowels, while others still need to work on short vowels. You might manage your classroom so that students can work with partners. During this time all students could do the same activities, but each partnership would work on the features they need help with. For example, all groups could sort pictures and words, but the types of sorts would be different for each group. If you haven't done so already, you might also introduce word hunts, in which children search their own independent reading for the features (blends, digraphs, and so on) they have been working on in word study. You will also want to continue to work on phonemic awareness. According to the Common Core State

Standards, students should know spelling-sound correspondences for common vowel teams (*oa*, *ee*, *ea*, and so on). You will want to help students notice the visual patterns in these words, as well as the sounds they make. When working with these patterns you might ask kids to sort all the words that have the same sound but have different visual patterns, such as *-ight* and *-ite*. In this way, students will learn that some words have a part that sounds the same but looks different. As you are working on VCV spelling patterns, help children understand the silent *e* rule, since it is very consistent. Show them how you can go from *can* to *cane*, changing the sound of *a* by adding *e* to the end of the word.

Also, in this month you may decide to introduce *r*-controlled vowels (*ar*, *ir*, *er*) to children who are ready. Have them sort words that contain *ar* and *ir*, for example. If you are teaching *r*-controlled vowels in word work, make sure to teach kids to use that knowledge to help them figure out tricky words.

Continue to introduce four or five high-frequency words a week. It might be necessary to differentiate your instruction so that children have opportunities during the week to work with the words they still need to acquire. You might have all your students make the words they struggle with using magnetic letters and then write them on dry-erase boards.

You will also want to emphasize that students need to reflect on what they have learned. You might ask kids to talk to partners and/or write about what they learned about words. At first, you'll probably need to prompt them to notice a few things about the words. You might ask them to think about the sounds in the words, the way the words look, and the patterns that are the same in the columns. These conversations about words will reinforce the principles taught and will help make the learning more transparent and transferable.

During this unit of study it's helpful to read nonfiction texts during shared reading. You could model the different ways to approach nonfiction texts and how to read them, how to decide where to start on a particular page, how to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary or polysyllabic words, how to study a topic of interest, and how to synthesize text into one's own words. For example, if you were reading about flowers, you might do a shared reading of the book *From Field to Flowers* (National Geographic, Windows on Literacy) and demonstrate a vocabulary-building strategy using pages 2 and 3. The text reads, "Look at all the flowers. They are for sale in a flower store." (page 2) "A person who sells flowers is called a florist. Where does the florist get all the flowers?" (page 3). *Florist* may be an unknown word for many students. Drawing on the strategy of using the first part of the word (consonants) plus the next two letters, you could mask the *ist* in florist, leaving *flor* exposed. You'd tell children that if they read the first part they'll see a consonant team and a word they know. Students will say, "/flor/!" You'll say, "I know you know this word," as you write *list* on a white board. Students will say, "/list/." Then you'll ask, "What's left if I take the *l* away?" Students will say, "/ist/." You'll say, "Now I think you can read this word," as you reveal the whole word *florist*. Students will say the word, and you'll ask them whether they can reread (or remember) the information on the two pages and tell you what the



word means. An effective reader might think, “I have one of these flower stores on my street. That word *florist* is in the sentence about the person who sells the flowers, and it says, ‘is called a florist.’ I know that *a* is a noun marker that tells the name of someone. So a person who sells flowers must be a florist!” Remind children that they will use these same strategies when they read their own nonfiction books.

To support your word study curriculum, below are a few suggested lessons, based on features of spelling in which many second graders tend to need explicit instruction:

<b>If you decide to teach . . .</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Words Their Way</i>, 4th edition</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons, Grade 2</i> (Pinnell &amp; Fountas)</b>
Long vowel spelling patterns	6-2, 6-4 to 6-15 (pp. 189–199)	SP3 to SP6 (pp. 173–188) SP9 (pp. 197–200) SP11 (pp. 205–208) SP13 to SP15 (pp. 213–224) SP17 (pp. 229–232)
<i>r</i> -controlled vowels	6-3 (p. 190)	LS7 (pp. 95–98)
High-frequency words	pp. 182–183	HF1 to HF9 (pp. 235–270)

## One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

One of the most predictable issues you may face when launching this nonfiction reading unit of study is a shortage of materials. The Common Core State Standards emphasize that half your students’ reading be nonfiction, meaning that you need books at appropriate levels to support this. You will want to be sure that you have gathered up a substantial nonfiction library. You may decide to share books between classrooms, have students read out of shared bins (at their just-right book levels), or visit your local public libraries to get the materials your students need.

You will want to consider the levels your children are reading to be sure the suggested plan that follows will meet their needs. If your children are reading longer, more sophisticated texts (levels L or higher), you may want to adapt the plan to include a string of lessons on determining importance or summarizing—your readers will probably need support with this, especially if they are reading longer books. You will also want to check their book logs to be sure their volume is still strong, even in nonfiction. You can refer back to the chart in Unit One for guidance on appropriate reading rate and volume.

For children still reading below level K, you will want to pull out all the stops to be sure that they are getting the support they need to read on grade level. Chances are, you’ll want to do lots of book introductions and guided reading; you may want to help children find text sets that support both vocabulary and content; you might do nonfiction shared reading or read-alouds in small groups with these children; and of

course you'll want to find more time (actual minutes) each day for children to read, whether by extending your reading workshop, having a second reading time each day, borrowing five or ten more minutes here and there throughout your day, or pushing kids to read more after school or at home. We invite you to use your running records, spelling inventories, and word lists to determine exactly what your students might need in terms of word solving, phonics, or even retelling or inference work. If you find that you need to lengthen the part on word solving, make sure you do so. You will want to use your data to create your own road map for teaching. You may also study your children's book logs and Post-it notes, your own conferring notes, and any other source of data you may have to make wise decisions about the direction of this unit.

## **Part One: Nonfiction Readers Read to Become Smarter about Our World and the Things in It**

- "Today I want to teach you that when nonfiction readers begin reading our books we make a quick study of the lay of the land. That is, we glance at the table of contents, the chapter heading, and the subheadings to get an idea of how the text will go."
- "Today I want to teach you that just as we read fiction in a story voice, we read nonfiction with an explaining voice. This voice often explains or teaches new things."
- "Today I want to teach you that nonfiction readers don't roar through texts at the speed of lightning. We pause often to collect our thoughts about what we're learning, and we put all we learned about a topic into different mental containers."
  - *Tip:* "We can use the section headings to help us do this or even create our own section headings for our books when they don't have any!"
- "Today I want to teach you that nonfiction readers train our mind to pick out topic sentences. Nonfiction readers know that text paragraphs have one special sentence within them that tells us the topic of what that entire paragraph is about."
- "Today I want to remind you of some of the ways that readers can retell our nonfiction texts to our partners. We can retell our texts across our fingers, teaching what we have learned. We can also retell by using special transition words like *or*, *and*, *however*, and *but*."
- "Today I want to remind you that partners don't just retell our nonfiction books to each other. We can also ask each other questions to make sure we understand."

First, readers teach our partner about what we have learned and then we ask questions like, 'What does that really *mean*?' and 'Can you give an example of that information?'"

- "Today I want to remind you that nonfiction readers use phrases that help us create a list of things we learned. We can say things like, 'One kind of \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_. Another kind is \_\_\_\_\_. The last kind of \_\_\_\_\_ I learned about is \_\_\_\_\_.'" "

## **Part Two: Nonfiction Readers See More Than the Text on the Page**

- "Today I want to teach you that nonfiction readers read more than just the words on the page. We 'study' and 'read' pictures too. We figure out how these pictures connect with or add to the words on the page."
  - ▶ *Tip:* "We look carefully at the details of the picture and we read the labels, the headings, the sidebars, and any other words that will help us to understand exactly what this picture is telling us and how it connects to the words we're reading."
- "Today I want to remind you that sometimes we find pictures without any text. When this happens we search for words to explain what the picture is teaching."
- "Today I want to teach you that reading is not a one-way highway. Nonfiction readers don't just take texts in. We come out with questions and ideas in response. It is two-way traffic! When readers pay attention to and jot down all the thoughts and questions that we have as we read, we can grow bigger ideas."
- "Today I want to remind you that nonfiction readers can push ourselves to respond to the new things we are learning. We can respond on Post-its or mini-pads to the new things we're learning, and we don't just copy down the words on the page. We jot things like: 'This makes me think \_\_\_\_\_.'" "This makes me wonder \_\_\_\_\_.'" "This is just like \_\_\_\_\_.'" "This surprises me because \_\_\_\_\_.'" "
- "Today I want to remind you that nonfiction readers don't just ask questions, we also work hard to answer them. When we have a question about our topic that the page doesn't answer, we hunt elsewhere in the book—or we pick up another book to find it!"
  - ▶ *Tip:* "We can use the table of contents and the index in this book and in other books to find answers!"

### **Part Three: Nonfiction Readers Tackle Tricky Words in Our Books**

- “Today I want to teach you that when readers come across a hard word in our nonfiction texts, we use all we know to figure out what it might mean.”
  - *Tip:* “We can figure out what words mean by reading a little further, consulting the pictures and the sidebars on the page, checking for a glossary, or simply fitting another word in the place of the hard word and then reading on.”
- “Today I want to teach you that when readers come across a tricky word in our nonfiction texts, we remember the many strategies we used when we read fiction books to help us.”
  - “We use the charts in the room and think of all the different ways we already know to figure these words out. We ask ourselves, ‘What word would sound right here? What kinds of words would make sense?’”
- “Today I want to teach you that when readers come across a hard word in our nonfiction texts, we try to pronounce it reading it part by part, then check the text features—pictures, captions, labels—to help us figure out what it means.”
- “Today I want to tell that sometimes readers will come across a hard word in our nonfiction texts and we may try every strategy we know to figure it out but still not understand what it might mean. When we’ve tried and we still are unsure, we jot it down on a Post-it and try to figure it out with our partner.”

### **Part Four: Nonfiction Readers Can Read More Than One Book about a Topic to Compare and Contrast**

- “Today I want to remind you that when we are members of a reading club, we talk to other club members and plan the work our club will do. One thing that reading clubs might plan is to jot notes on the ideas and the questions we have as we read the books on our topic. At the end of our reading, we can collect these Post-its in our club folder.”
- “Today I want to tell you that readers in a club can choose one Post-it in our club folder and talk for a long time about it. When we are finished, we can choose another Post-it to talk about.”
- “Today I want to teach you that nonfiction readers often read more than one book on topics we love. Then we can compare and contrast the information. We

note the ways in which different books on the same topic are organized. We also note that they give us different angles and details about the same topic.”

- “Today I want to teach you that nonfiction readers grow our understanding of a topic by reading many books on it. When we read the second, third, and/or fourth book on a topic, we mix and match what we’re reading now with what we read before to grow a more complete understanding of this topic. One way nonfiction readers mix and match information across books is by making quick notes.”
- “Today I want to tell you that club members can celebrate all we’ve learned by collecting our big ideas and notes about our new learning and creating a poster or big book page highlighting our new thinking.”



## UNIT FIVE

# Series Reading and Cross-Genre Reading Clubs

**JANUARY/FEBRUARY**  
(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: K/L)

Teachers who organize their libraries to teach series say they find that their children begin to read longer and stronger—the books call out to them. Think back over your own reading life and you may recall a time when you were a series book reader. For some of us, the series we loved was Nancy Drew, for others it was the Boxcar Children books, Cherry Ames, Sweet Valley High, or the Hardy Boys. By this time, your second graders have added a number of strategies to their repertoire for understanding characters and plot and for reading with fluency. Series books offer a whole new palette for children to practice these newly learned skills and an opportunity to learn more about prediction, characters, and recognizing patterns.

There are lots of reasons to have your students read series books. For one, children's comprehension is supported when they encounter familiar characters and places, book after book, throughout a series. The scaffolded learning inherent in reading series books is in alignment with the Common Core State Standards. Also, your introduction of just *one* book from a series will set your children up for *all* the books in the series, providing yet another scaffold. Then, too, teaching children to think across the books in a series also sets them up for working with longer, multichapter novels. You'll surely find that reading within a series helps young readers' stamina. In the end, all of these factors together provide the support needed for some of your students to move up a level of difficulty.

The best thing about series books, though, is that they seem designed to hook kids into characters. Your hope is that your readers will become fans of Fluffy or Ramona or



Poppleton or Froggy. As children go deeper into a new series, they fall in love with the recurring characters (whether sad, heroic, tragic, smart, mischievous) who somehow always find themselves in challenging predicaments and situations and yet always exhibit the same predictable behaviors and belief systems. Since at this time of the year your students will be reading with more accuracy, fluency, and comprehension across a wide range of text levels, reading series books with more developed characters is an authentic investment in the world of story.

The first thing you will need to do is pull together a library that can sustain the number of reading clubs you have in your classroom. You'll want to start early in the year planning, coordinating, and sharing resources with other teachers. Pull out the favorites: Frog and Toad, Cam Jansen, The Zack Files, A-Z Mysteries, Danger Guys, Ready Freddy, The Polk Street Kids, and Willamena, and be sure you find series at every level. Or take out the lower-level Little Bear. For your higher-level readers you might dig out The Stories That Julian Tells, Amber Brown, The Amazing Monty, and Encyclopedia Brown.

Series books are especially good for supporting readers as they move to harder levels. If you have kids who are not ready for transitional book baggies, it's probably a sign that they need some extra teaching and guidance. It is likely that as you enter this unit, more children will be reading from transitional book baggies than not. You can do some whole- or small-group work on supporting oneself in harder books and talk up the purposeful goal-driven stance that can support acceleration.

## Launching the Unit

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Once you have set up the books and thought about how your clubs will be organized, you will invite your students into this new world of series reading. You might begin by gathering them on the rug and telling a little story. "This weekend I was watching TV with my godson. We were watching Sponge Bob! Hudson has seen almost every episode. While we were watching, he would shout, 'I knew that was going to happen! That always happens to him!' Then he would fall down on the sofa cracking up! We watched a few shows in a row, and I got to know Sponge Bob so well that sometimes I could guess what was going to happen. Each episode is kind of similar. Sponge Bob gets into the same kinds of problems, and he and his best friend Patrick the Starfish act the same way together in lots of episodes."

Then you might say something like "Do you ever do this when you are watching TV? You just start talking to the television like Hudson, saying things like, 'I knew it! He always does that! What? No way!' You do! Think about one of your shows and the characters in it. What do they always do, how do they act? What kind of problems do they usually run in to? Quickly tell your partner."

Next, you'll explain the link between the patterns in television shows and those in series books, saying something like "Our series books are like little episodes in the lives of our characters. We can get to know them so well that we can predict with

whom our characters will be doing things, what will happen to them, and how they will handle their problems.”

In this unit, in alignment with the Common Core State Standards, young readers will draw on previously learned strategies and develop new ones to integrate what they know about a character (or characters) across a series. Children will use this information to understand, predict, and critique a story. They will react and pay attention to the important parts of the story and learn about how stories in series tend to go. They may pay attention to predictable structures that contain familiar, typical elements; these observations will help them predict and understand the characters better. Finally, children will learn to make decisions about what they want to study and how they will study those things together in reading clubs.

For this unit, you’d be wise to select your read-alouds from a series that no one in the class is reading. Most likely, you’ll want each book in the series to be relatively short, so that you can move from one text to the next within the first week, pointing out patterns in much the same way you hope your readers will be recognizing them.

## **Part One: Readers Figure Out How a Series Goes, Noticing Patterns and Predicting What Will Happen**

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In this first part of the unit, you’ll invite children to read series books looking for predictable patterns, for how a particular series goes, and in particular for predictable character traits. Gather your children close and say, “Series books aren’t just fun reads—they are opportunities to get to know characters and story patterns really, really well. That’s because in a series, the same characters (and sometimes similar storylines, too) appear not just in one book but in two or three books and sometimes in as many as ten or twelve!”

Because children will be members of series reading clubs, they will have the opportunity to do some substantial, rich work with understanding patterns. You may choose to have readers look for ways in which their series are structured similarly from book to book. Readers of the Junie B. Jones books, for example, may notice that these books always start with an explanation of the *B.* in Junie B.’s name, while readers of Nate the Great will probably notice that in each book Nate is introduced and then the mystery is revealed right away, with clues and suspects close behind.

Tell students that now is the time to pool their very best thinking to sort through all the information they’ll encounter about the characters in their series, deciding what seems especially important. As they have thoughts and notice patterns not only across books but also across their thinking, encourage them to jot notes on Post-its. Be sure to teach specific things kids can pay special attention to: parts where the main character experiences trouble, parts where the character seems to change. Then, too, nudge your children to go one step further and ask, “Does she [he] act like this in other stories?” Since many of your students will be reading these books relatively

quickly, they can start to make the same sorts of Post-its from one book to the next, looking for examples of how a character behaves in the same ways again and again.

It is important that children keep track of what they are learning about their characters and how the stories they are reading develop. Teach them to mark parts they want to talk about in their reading clubs. Children might flag parts of the text in which a character is having strong feelings or to which they themselves react strongly. They could also mark and jot notes about parts in which there is trouble or change (either subtle or large). Always, children should be especially on the lookout for patterns; when they find one, encourage them to use a Post-it to speculate, “Why is this pattern happening?”

You may decide to do some teaching that will lift the level of jottings. Instead of writing simple observations, you could teach your students to jot down what they are thinking by asking, “What is it about this that makes me think it is important?” or adding “because.” For example, instead of jotting “Chester and Wilson—acting mean,” a child might jot “C and W acting mean—maybe Lily scares them?” To talk well about a book, children may need to stop and look over the Post-its they have made to be sure to keep the more significant ideas and discard the ones they no longer need.

Children have been making predictions from the beginning of the year, and they will continue to do so with their series books. Now, however, they will have even more information to help them. Paying close attention and recognizing patterns, whether they include a recurring setting and environment or patterns of behaviors, will get students to anticipate what’s yet to come. “Now that I have read a lot of Henry and Mudge books, I know that Mudge really loves Henry,” one student might say. “So I’m thinking that since Henry just got stung by a bee, he is going to try to do something to make Henry feel better. Most dogs don’t do that, but I think Mudge will!” A child who reads the part in which Poppleton begins to smear cooking oil all over his skin can predict that next he will find another crazy product to smear all over his skin. That is, children will know by now that in a series, things tend to happen over and over again. Using what they know about a character or about how stories go will help them put together the parts of new books in a series.

Second graders are fascinated when they realize how two (or more) books in a series “go together.” Does the second book take place at the same time as the first book? Are the characters growing older? Has the main character’s family changed in any way? If Mudge went to dog school in one book, does his behavior improve in another book? Does the character seem to learn from the problems she encountered in the one book, carrying these insights as she moves forward?

The work of this first part will leave club mates talking eagerly, trying not only to extend one another’s ideas but also to question and further refine their own ideas. You might have students who easily make such conversational moves as, “I can add on to what you were saying,” or “Yeah, I know what you mean,” or “Another example is.” But you want to make sure that students are also clarifying and probing for more information from their club mates, saying things like, “What do you mean?” and “Why do you think that is important?”

Read-alouds are fine times to practice club work in scaffolded ways. Have readers gather on the carpet in their club formations. Often, it is easier for children to work in clubs when you've set them up in the read-aloud to have provocative, dissimilar ideas not only about the same *series* but also the same *text*.

## Part Two: Even When Readers *Think We Know How a Series Will Go, We Are Ready to Be Surprised*

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In this next part, you will teach children ways to grow ideas about characters and also to be flexible regarding their ideas as they read on. One way to support this endeavor is to teach children ways to accumulate the story across pages and chapters. You'd be wise to teach your readers that they can stop after chunks of texts (or chapters) and ask themselves, "What is going on with my character so far?" or "What do I know about my character so far?" You might teach children to use some kind of graphic organizer, such as a T-chart, to keep track of their thoughts.

At times, your children may express some unfounded or inflexible "all or nothing" statements. When this happens, you may teach them that readers revise our ideas through club work. Club members can talk back to the book in their conversations. A child could say, "I know that Pinky is going to get his feelings hurt, because usually by chapter three something bad happens to him that makes him realize he is not all that special. He *always* thinks he is better than others." This leaves the door wide open for his club mates to challenge this idea. "Always?" one child might ask. The first child might then revise his theory based on new ideas. "Well, sometimes Pinky thinks he is better than others." This type of revision allows children to consider another point of view. When *does* Pinky act this way? What different problems do we see that cause Pinky to act another way? Asking clarifying questions like these can nudge young readers to form opinions and get them talking closer to the text. The ensuing club conversations might then sound like this: "I disagree with what Jamaica did." "I don't know what Maria means by \_\_\_\_\_." "Why does Harry think that is important?" The Common Core State Standards suggest that work with point of view is crucial to second-grade reading development. In addition, using words and phrases that help children refer both to texts and to the ideas of others to support discussion is a goal addressed in the standards.

As children come to understand how series in general and the series they are reading in particular tend to go and to anticipate and predict based on what they've read, they will often find themselves surprised by the actions of characters they thought they knew well. After they've been hit with enough surprises and come to expect them, they can will be on the lookout for twists in patterns and for moments when a character's action is surprising. That is, your young readers will begin to read with eyes wide open, ready to be surprised, to catch the one time the character or the plot does something unexpected. Suggest that just as children have paid close attention to

the patterns in a series, they now also pay close attention to the disruptions in patterns—and to jot these instances down on Post-its.

Now is the perfect time to teach children that readers come to especially understand a character by paying attention to times when she or he acts out of character. A reader may say, “Junie B. Jones is acting weird. She’s being really quiet in this part and she’s usually sort of a loud kid.” Once readers notice these unusual character behaviors, help them extend their thinking by supplying a possible reason for the twist. In the example above, the child might add to her thought about Junie B. by saying, “Maybe she gets quiet when her feelings are hurt. That boy was kind of mean when he said she couldn’t go to his birthday party, so maybe that’s what made her quiet.”

You will want to teach your children that this sort of thinking across books in a series and across the story itself pushes readers to think deeply in ways that future readings (of later books in the series) require. Remind students that these are significant realizations worth jotting on a Post-it. When a student accumulates several of these sorts of Post-its, they will be better able to organize the big idea and substantiate it with textual evidence in their writing about their reading.

### **Part Three: Readers Grow Smart Ideas by Looking Across Different Series, and We Use the Smart Work of Club Members to Push Our Thinking**

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By now, children will have read a couple of different series—or more—and will have a sense not only of particular character and plot patterns but also of how series in general tend to go. This is a good time to check in with clubs and make sure that members are working together in helpful and meaningful ways. You will likely find that club members are following some agreed-on structures for their discussions. They are likely listening intently, adding to one another’s ideas in respectful ways, and linking their thoughts to those others have expressed. All of these discussion skills are outlined in the Common Core State Standards, and you will likely look at your students at this point in the unit and feel assured that they are using these skills with growing confidence and poise.

With these skills in place, your students will be more independent and ready to push their thinking even further. This is a good time, then, to set children up for some comparison and contrast work. Suggest that they step back to think across several series, noting important similarities and differences and using what they learned about each individual series—and about series in general—to now approach a cross-series study.

Clubs may explore how story plots and characters in an individual series remain the same throughout the books and how similar series explore similar themes and character types. The Junie B. Jones and Judy Moody series both feature willful, sassy heroines who get themselves into trouble again and again. Cam Jansen and Jigsaw Jones are both detectives. The Pinky and Rex series and the George and Martha series are both about two friends, a boy and a girl. Then, too, there are ways in which series

mirror but don't quite match one another. The Horrible Harry books are about a boy who fancies himself horrible—and about his various exploits in school—while the Marvin Redpost series is also about a boy's school experiences, but Marvin is anything but awful; in fact, he is utterly sweet. Yet both boys encounter trouble, have adventures, leave us laughing. Clubs who read similar series might think not only about character differences and similarities but also about parallel (or diverging) themes. They can ask themselves, "What are the big ideas or problems that happen again and again in these series? How are they alike? How are they different?" Many authors of children's series explore similar themes. Children will encounter kids who get into trouble or try to solve crimes and can ask themselves, "Why does this character get into trouble over and over?" They will meet characters who succeed and fail at friendship, who do everything they can to fit in or to stand out, who struggle with difficult family dynamics.

Some clubs may choose to have two members read a couple books in one series, while the other members read two books in another series, to get lots of ideas going. Some clubs may opt to focus on character similarities and differences across series, while others may prefer to focus on the big ideas. Still other clubs may focus their comparisons on books of a particular kind (e.g., series that are funny, series that get our hearts racing, detective series). Throughout this work, you'll want to continue to support the work children do while also encouraging their independence.

You might want to remind children that series characters, just like characters in single books, share certain traits that make these books particularly powerful. We can read a series noticing how secondary characters affect the main character, for example. In *Chester's Way*, when Lily moves into the neighborhood, she affects best friends Chester and Wilson. Besides naming the effect (Chester and Wilson get secretive and act sort of aloof), you might nudge students to think about why Lily has this effect. Is it because of her personality? Is it because Chester and Wilson are unsure about inviting another friend into their relationship? Are they insecure because Lily seems so cool? Noticing patterns in the story and then considering the underlying reasons is sophisticated, rich work. Your kids may need a lot of support during conferences and reminders during club discussions to move beyond noticing and naming to thinking about the underlying reasons. Again, you'll want to encourage your students to use Post-its to hold on to their ideas so they can talk and write about them more readily. Then, too, you'll want to support children as they think now across several series to notice that sometimes two authors explore different aspects of a similar topic. One author may be interested in what tests friendships, while another may explore the ways in which friendships are unshakable sources of support when we struggle with family.

Throughout this unit, as you confer with clubs and encourage members to provide textual evidence for their ideas, you might encourage children to extrapolate these ideas to the world around them. You can help them move beyond noticing and commenting within the story to comment on the world at large. To help with this work,



they could use prompts such as, “What does this make you think about copycats now?” or “Does this book or series help you think differently about best friends?”

## Part Four: Readers Let a Series Book Lead Us into Learning about a Topic

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In this final part of the unit, you will show your students how a series book can lead you to learn about a topic. We have all had the experience of reading a work of fiction and then pausing to say, “Huh? I wonder,” and then looking something up on the Internet or buying an information book about that topic the next day. This is just what we want our students to do.

To prepare for this part of the unit, you will want to think big. Start by anticipating some of the topics that show up a lot in series. Think about the books kids are reading and the paths those books can lead them down. Kids who are reading Fluffy books might want to learn about guinea pigs. Students who are reading about Henry and Mudge might want to learn more about dogs. Others might want to learn about camping after reading *Pinky and Rex and The Double-Dad Weekend*. Your Iris and Walter readers might learn more about living in the country versus the city. For your level M readers a whole world of related information will open up. Topics might include detectives, pirates, knights, dinosaurs, and so forth. Start by searching through your nonfiction books for titles that will support your students’ interests. Find a place for all of these materials in your classroom. You might also talk to the computer teacher in your building and ask whether children can do some research in the computer lab. As this part of the unit unfolds, you can open up the reading possibilities by having kids shop not just for series but for other fiction books that have nonfiction information companion books. You may decide to “presort” these much like teachers usually do for first graders, or students could help you identify them.

As you launch this new part of the unit, you can gather all those committed series readers and show them how the same series books they have been reading can start them on a whole new journey. You might want to tell them the story of a cross-genre reading project from your own life. Perhaps before going on a trip to Tuscany you read *Under the Tuscan Sun*, a travel guide on Tuscany, and a book about the art of Italy. Or maybe you started to read *Clara and Mr. Tiffany* and wanted to find out more about stained glass windows. You might say to kids, “Readers, I have been reading this book that I really like—it is called *Clara and Mr. Tiffany*. It is a really interesting book. It is about this woman, Clara, who was one of the first women to design stained glass windows for people’s homes. She made windows like those colorful ones you see in churches, but she made them for people’s homes! The thing about this book is that it is fiction—it is a made-up story—but there is a lot of real information in it. As I pressed on in this book I got more and more into the windows. I looked up ‘stained glass windows’ on the Internet and started to read about them. I wondered whether what the characters in my fiction book said about making stained glass was real, so I also searched ‘how to make stained glass.’”

As most of your students move into levels K/L and sometimes M, the books will contain a greater range of topics and there will be more for children to wonder about. The characters will do things that your students have never tried and go places they have never gone. This is a perfect opportunity to say, “Let’s do some gathering—let’s learn more!” You will want to get your kids excited about the idea of reading across genres to find out more information that fits with their fictional stories. Invite kids to think about their books and what they can learn about. You might say, “I know that Karina is reading the second Magic Tree House book, *The Knight at Dawn*. She was all ready to go on to book three but decided she would do something more like me. Now she is going to read two nonfiction books about knights.”

One way to help your clubs imagine this is through your read-alouds. The Common Core State Standards challenge us to expose children to both grade level and more complex texts. To meet this challenge, you might choose to read aloud a text that is a more complex than most second graders will read independently. You could read the first Time Warp Trio book to your class, stretching their comprehension skills as you lead them to envision this complex text. As you read, you might choose to stop occasionally and read to your students from a nonfiction book about King Arthur. Then you might bring that new knowledge back to your fiction book, saying, “Oh, I get it now, the Knights of the Round Table fought evil, and now that the kids are in those times, they are fighting evil too!” Then you might choose to read about English knights by looking up the phrase using a kid’s search engine like Yahoo Kids or a website for kids’ questions like [www.askkids.com](http://www.askkids.com).

This kind of whole-class work will set the stage for your students to embark on their own reading journeys. Then, too, you might decide to balance this with some reading that children can do independently. Perhaps you will read *Arthur Makes the Team*, in which the beloved Arthur tries out for Little League but worries that he will not be good enough. You can show your students how this might lead you to wonder about Little League and baseball and then research that as a class.

Because your students will already have strong routines for talking in clubs, now you will want to show them how wondering can become part of their club conversations. You can teach them that they can look over the books they have read so far and come up with some possible topics to learn about. The club members can make a decision together, or they can each investigate a different topic and bring what they find back to their club to share. You will also want to teach your students that when you go off to learn about something, you often return to your fiction book to see how your new knowledge changes the reading of that book. Club members can talk about what they learned and what that makes them think about their fiction books. They can check whether the fiction book is accurate. For example, Fluffy drinks tea with Emma, a second grader, when Emma takes Fluffy home for spring vacation, but do guinea pigs *really* drink tea? They might also notice information in their fiction books that they missed the first time: “Oh, it says Tabby had a fur ball! Now I know all about how cats get fur balls and have to cough them up!”

As your students learn more information, they will notice many more places in their books where they can wonder and then research. You might encourage children to keep a list of questions to look into or even an inquiry notebook. As they read any fiction book, they can jot questions and musings. You might teach children to then examine these questions or musings with their clubs. They can think about which ones they might answer quickly with a glance in one book or an Internet search and which ones they want to collect a little more information about and study together as a group. Learning that grows out of reading fiction is so natural, and yet this may be the first time your students have thought to do this on their own. Be sure your students are excited by all their new knowledge. You might teach them to have conversations that allow them to “information drop.” You can teach them that they can go back to discuss their fiction books, incorporating their new knowledge. Teach them to say things like, “Did you know that \_\_\_\_\_?” or “I read this part and started to wonder \_\_\_\_\_. Then I found out \_\_\_\_\_.” Have some whole-class conversations about a read-aloud and let children practice using their new information to say more about their fiction books.

As this unit draws to a close, you may want to celebrate with a bit of sharing. You may choose to have students make bins with some of their cross-genre club materials. You may have one club share with another the information they learned and how it helped them better understand their series books. No matter what you decide, be sure that this kind of questioning and musing becomes part of what your children do anytime they are reading!

## Word Study/Phonics/Shared Reading

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As children move up levels, you will want to think about the types of texts they are encountering. It's important that your word study helps children meet the challenges of solving words in their texts. With students moving into levels J/K/L, you may want to work on recognizing syllables to support them with strategies for solving longer words. Along with considering the levels your students are reading, you will also want to assess children's use of beginning and ending consonant blends, short and long vowel spelling patterns, contractions, inflectional endings, and high-frequency words.

According to the Common Core State Standards, students should be able to apply phonics and word-analysis skills in decoding words. Make sure you are teaching your students a variety of strategies to solve words. During shared reading, you might teach students to use what they know about other words to read new words. For example, if I know the word *scream*, it can help me read the words *scroll* and *cream*. You'll want to watch students carefully as they read their texts to assess the strategies they are using to solve words. Are they sounding out letter by letter or are they using more efficient ways? Build up the range of strategies students have for solving words so that they don't rely on just one strategy. Some students try one strategy and when

it doesn't work they give up. When they are stuck on a word, you might nudge them to try other strategies by suggesting, "What else can you try?"

During shared reading, you might want to complement the series work by focusing on fluency and "getting into a character's head." You might decide it makes sense to continue the work on dramatization you've begun because you notice improved fluency and increased student engagement. For example, the plot unfolds through dialogue in many transitional series books. This dialogue is often "split" like this: "I think I should do this, boys and girls," Miss Mackle said. "Some ants bite. I don't want any of you to touch one. Is that clear?" Children must realize that Miss Mackle is still the one talking after "Miss Mackle said."

It's also important to continue supporting children with word-solving strategies and vocabulary building. For example, you could cover words in a shared reading text and ask students to think of an appropriate substitution. You could work on synonyms by reading a text and then saying, "How else could we say that?" or "What other words would work here?" For example, when the hungry giant says, "I'll hit you with my bommyknocker!" you could say, "What other word besides *bommyknocker* could the author have used?" and dramatize the other options. Your students will find that word choice matters, because "I'll hit you with my bommyknocker!" is undoubtedly more effective than "I'll hit you with my stick!"

You will want to examine your children's writing as well, to notice what transfers to their independent work. Notice their spelling attempts. For example, if they are writing *parkt* for *parked* you might work with *-ed* endings. Take this opportunity to assess their knowledge of the words on the word wall as well. For example, if all of your students can read and write the word *through* consistently you can retire that word and replace it with words they need to learn. If most of your students cannot read and write most of these words independently, you might begin January by practicing the ones already on the word wall without adding more for a couple of weeks. Otherwise, continue adding three or four words a week, making sure your students can read and write most of the words that are already there. Also, help children use word study charts when they are reading and writing.

To support your word study curriculum, on the following page are a few suggested lessons, based on features of spelling in which many second graders tend to need explicit instruction:

<b>If you decide to teach . . .</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Words Their Way</i>, 4th edition</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons, Grade 2</i> (Pinnell &amp; Fountas)</b>
Diphthongs ( <i>oy</i> and <i>ai</i> )	Adapt 5-19 (p. 164)	LS9 (pp. 103–106), LS21 (pp. 151–154)
Ambiguous vowel patterns	6-7 to 6-8 (pp. 193–194) 6-11 to 6-13 (pp. 195–197)	SP10 (pp. 201–204)
Complex blends ( <i>str</i> )	Adapt 5-6 to 5-8 (pp. 157–158), 5-19 (p. 164)	LS1 (pp. 71–74), LS5 (pp. 87–90), LS6 (pp. 91–94) (adapt to teach different consonant blends)
Contractions		WS10 to WS12 (pp. 339–350)
High-frequency words	pp. 182–183	HF1 to HF9 (pp. 235–270)

## Celebrating the Work of This Unit

If partners have been jotting down their ideas about the characters in their series all month, they can choose a few of their best ideas and place them on a piece of construction paper. Partners can share their ideas with other children in the class. Another idea is for readers to recommend their favorite series, giving a brief summary and explaining why it is so great.

## One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

There are any number of factors to take into account as you set forth on this unit, and you will need to pull from all your sources of data to decide which direction to take your teaching. The teaching points below are far from encompassing, nor are they set in stone. They are meant to help you imagine a possible pathway, one which will need detours and alternate pathways to reach the same end and may branch out very differently.

All year long, you've read aloud to your children from engaging, well-written literature and have been coaching your children to have grand conversations that push them to think more deeply about the characters, the story, and the lessons they might learn from the books you've read together. You will know that this has been going well if kids talk easily, staying on one topic for several speaking turns, and are able to come to new realizations and understandings that they may not have come to had they not been a part of the conversation. This has been the experience you hope your students have been having during whole-class conversations, so they can transfer all that work (reading comprehension, speaking and listening, and supporting ideas and opinions) to reading a series with a group of other kids—a reading club.

But perhaps this hasn't been your experience so far this year. If your students struggle with talking about books, then you will need to listen closely during your read-alouds and reading workshop to figure out why. Is it because they lack independence,

waiting for you to call on them or tell them what to do? Is it because they don't have strong comprehension and need support with that? Is it because English is their second or third language and they need more visual or written support to understand and talk about books?

Once you have considered the specific needs of your class, you will want to adapt the following plan accordingly. For example, you might decide to include a string of lessons on independence, teaching a few strategies for how to get a book talk going and keep it going. Or you might decide to teach a string of lessons on self-monitoring for comprehension—how to know when the book isn't making sense and what to do about it. Or you may decide to adapt these strategies to include more specific prompts for language or more concrete visual strategies and tools for kids to use in their clubs, such as sketching or sorting and organizing Post-its together.

### **Part One: Readers Figure Out How a Series Goes, Noticing Patterns and Predicting What Will Happen**

- “Just like sports fans follow our favorite teams and television watchers follow our favorite shows, so, too, readers follow our favorite series. Today I want to teach you that as we read on in a series we carry everything we know about the series with us. We enter each book in the series expecting to reencounter certain things, like a recurring cast of characters or setting.”
  - *Tip:* “When we read our series books, we see new things because of all we already know. We notice things that are out of the ordinary or pay attention to the introduction of new characters, new places, or new experiences.”
- “Readers, series books have predictable patterns. Today I want to teach you that when we read a series book, we are on the lookout for those patterns—for how a particular series goes. Does the character usually run into problems right away? Does she tend to act in similar ways? When we notice one, we ask ourselves, ‘Why is this pattern happening?’ ”
- “Today I want to teach you that as we read, we pay attention to certain things, like parts where the main character experiences trouble, seems to change, or experiences a big feeling. We can put Post-its on those parts in our books and ask ourselves, ‘Why is this happening?’ ”
  - *Tip:* “We can come up with theories about a character by noticing things like how the character acts, who the character surrounds himself with, and how he deals with trouble and change.”
- “Readers, we know that Post-its are a place to write what is happening or what we notice. But they’re not just for that. Today I want to teach you that they are also a place to explore our thinking about the book. As we jot we can ask



ourselves: 'What is it about this that makes me think it is important?' or add 'because.' "

- "Readers, we already know that series are full of patterns. Today I want to teach you that when we pay close attention to those patterns, we can use them to predict what will happen next in the story. We can say, 'I bet this means that \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_.'"
- "Today I want to teach you that when we are preparing to work with our club mates, one thing we can do is look over our Post-its and ask ourselves, 'Will this help me talk well about the book?' or 'Is this Post-it important to understand the book?' Then we collect the Post-its that will help us talk long and strong about the book."
- "Today I want to teach you that when we read on our own or work with a partner, we think about how different books in the series go together. We can ask, 'Did one happen first?' 'Did the character learn something in one book that he or she uses in the next?' 'Do other characters come back?' We can talk about the things that are the same and different or how parts in the different books fit together."
  - ▶ *Tip:* "Just like in everyday conversations, we work hard to make sure we understand what our partner is saying. As he or she talks we listen actively, and if we don't understand something, we ask, 'What do you mean?' Or if we want to understand our partner's thinking more deeply, we might say, 'Why do you think that is important?'"

## **Part Two: Even When Readers *Think* We Know How a Series Will Go, We Are Ready to Be Surprised**

- "Today I want to teach you that when we finish a chapter or a chunk or text, we can stop and make sure we are accumulating the story. One way we can do this is to ask ourselves, 'What is going on with my character so far?' or 'What do I know about my character so far?'"
  - ▶ *Tip:* "We can keep track of our thoughts by jotting them on a Post-it or using a graphic organizer, such as a T-chart."
- "Readers, we know that characters, like people, aren't always one way—even if they are often predictable. This is because characters are complex. Today I want to teach you that as we talk and learn about characters, we can use this knowledge to challenge and revise our all-or-nothing thinking. Instead of saying, 'Pinky *always*,' we might say, 'Sometimes he \_\_\_\_\_.'"
  - ▶ *Tip:* "When we notice our character acting in a way we don't agree with or are confused by, we can sort out our thinking in a partnership conversation. We

might say things like, 'I disagree with what Jamaica did,' or 'I don't know what Maria means by \_\_\_\_\_,' or 'Why does Harry think that is important?'

- "Since we know characters don't always act predictably, we can expect to be surprised now and then by things they do and say. Today I want to teach you that we can read our series on the *lookout* for those surprising moments—when a character acts out of character. When we see a character acting in a surprising way, we can pause and do some big thinking, jotting on a Post-it what we notice that is different and why we think that this is so."
- "Readers, you know how when we come to the end of a book, we know some of our work is just beginning? Well, today I want to teach you that when we end a book, we can reflect, asking, 'What was the *whole* book about?' and 'Was the author trying to teach us something?' Then we might go back and find evidence in the book that the author really was trying to teach that lesson."

### **Part Three: Readers Grow Smart Ideas by Looking Across Different Series, and We Use the Smart Work of Club Members to Push Our Thinking**

- "Today I want to remind you that when we meet with club members, we don't only think about our *current* series, we think about *all* the series books we have read, and we think about the patterns in those books. We can think about the types of characters, the types of problems, even the messages the different authors might be teaching. We can talk with our club, thinking 'What is the same in these series?' and 'What is different?'"
- "There are lots of ways that a reading club can tackle comparing and contrasting series books. Today, you will have a few options for how your club will do this work. You could get lots of ideas going by having two members read a couple books in one series while the other members read two books in another series, or you could focus on character similarities and differences across series. Other book clubs may prefer to focus on the big ideas. Maybe you might even think about how certain types of books (funny, detective, etc.) are similar and different."
- "We know that, just like real people, characters can act differently depending on who they are with or who they are around. Today I want to teach you that, as readers, we can come up with possible reasons this is so. We can closely study the patterns around our characters' interactions and then make theories about these patterns. We can try to figure out why they're acting or reacting in certain

ways. Are they trying to impress or embarrass or annoy the other character they're with? Why?"

- "Readers can even come up with new theories as we study characters' reactions and interactions. We can look from book to book to book within a series to see if and when these patterns tend to repeat."
- "Whether we're reading alone or talking in our clubs, readers come up with theories about why characters do certain things or say certain things. We also read to find out what the author is trying to teach us. Today I want to teach you that we can think about how these theories and ideas matter to the real world. For example, after reading *Chester's Way*, we may ask, 'What does this make me think about copycats now?' or 'Does this book or this series help me to think differently about best friends now?'"

#### **Part Four: Readers Let a Series Book Lead Us into Learning about a Topic**

- "Readers, sometimes reading one book can lead us to wonder about new topics. Today I want to teach you that when you find yourself wondering about something as you read your series book, you can stop and say, 'I want to learn more about that!'"
- *Tip:* "While reading and talking about our series books, we may wonder things like, 'What kind of place is this?' or 'Who are/were these people?' or 'What is life like for \_\_\_\_\_?' This can help us find topics we may want to learn more about."
- *Tip:* "We can look over the books we have read so far and come up with some possible topics to learn about. Today I want to teach you that this can be done in different ways, on our own or in our clubs. We can work together to find out more about one one thing we wonder about, or we can each investigate a different topic and then bring back what we each find to share with our clubs."
- "Today I also want to remind you that we can go back and forth between books to find out what all the new information we're learning makes us feel and think about a topic. After reading a nonfiction text on a topic, we can go back to the series book that introduced the topic and see how the new information changes our ideas or helps us grow new ones."
- *Tip:* "Readers can also go back to our fiction/series books looking for parts that could be true or not true."
- *Tip:* "Readers can go back to our fiction/series books and notice teaching facts or new information about our topics that we may not have noticed before."

- *Tip:* “Some of you have already started to collect your musings on Post-its, and others are starting to write them into your reading notebooks or on bookmarks. Whatever way you have chosen, you want to have a place where you collect all of your questions and musings.”
- “Today I want to teach you that there are many different ways we can research the answers to our questions. After we read our fiction books and collect many, many questions about different things, we have to look over these questions, together, in our clubs and think about which ones we can find the answers to quickly and which ones we may have to study more by collecting more and more information.”
- *Tip:* “Sometimes, we can flip to a section in a nonfiction book or quickly look up information on the Internet, while other times we may need to gather several books and articles on a topic to study for a longer amount of time.”
- “In our clubs, we talked about our series books and how they led us to new topics and information on those topics. Today I want to teach you that in our conversations, we use all the information we’ve learned to teach others and to talk smart about our topics. That is, we talk with our club members using explaining language and any specific information or new vocabulary we may have learned. We can ask each other, ‘Did you know that \_\_\_\_\_?’ or explain, ‘I read this part and started to wonder \_\_\_\_\_. Then I found out \_\_\_\_\_.’”



## UNIT SIX

# Nonfiction Reading Clubs

**FEBRUARY/MARCH**  
(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: K/L/M)

### Unit Overview

When a curriculum spirals, it essentially does three things. First, it revisits old ideas or instructional content. Second, it increases the depth and level of this content. Third, in Jerome Bruner's words, it "re-construes" old content, connecting it with "other knowledge." This month, as you revisit expository nonfiction (a genre that you introduced in Unit Four), expect to do all three, in more or less chronological order. You will begin by revisiting earlier teaching, reminding children of the essential "habits of mind" that make for proficient nonfiction reading and tackling difficulty in texts. Once you have children doing this work again, you'll remind readers to continue club conversations around nonfiction texts, the way they began doing in December. But this time you will teach them more complex ways of thinking collaboratively. In Part Two, you'll ask your students to grow from learning what the author is aiming to teach by developing their own ideas about the texts. The third and final part consists of comparing and contrasting information and ideas within books, across books, and across baskets, building on the work of the first two parts and this year's earlier work.

At this point in the school year, your on-grade level readers will be reading around a Level L in nonfiction. If you have students reading below that level (I/J/K), you may want to revisit the Unit Four curriculum for some of the teaching points recommended there. For students who are above grade level (M/N/O), you may look ahead to Unit Eight to see the kind of work children at those levels can be taught to do.

This unit is strongly aligned with the Common Core State Standards because of its focus on nonfiction and speaking and listening.

## Setting Up Your Library

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Each club will need its own basket of just-right texts to read, study, and talk about for each week you'll be in this unit. To prepare these baskets, take stock of your existing library and make plans to restock as needed. Like the curriculum, the contents of your class' nonfiction library, too, needs to spiral upward! Of course you'll want to retain most books from the December nonfiction unit. However, remember that your students have grown as readers so they will be reading at higher levels. Therefore, topic baskets must also be dotted with many *new* nonfiction texts, preferably ones that address familiar topics and are at the higher ends of your children's current levels. Prior knowledge or topic familiarity will scaffold readers' climb to a higher-level book. As you present these to your room, however, watch like a hawk to monitor that these are actually within your readers' range of comfort. Check that readers have access to just-right books at all times, that they aren't merely thumbing pages looking at illustrations in books that are too hard for them to understand. As the Common Core State Standards discuss, matching readers to a text at an appropriate level of complexity involves several variables such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences; this is especially true in nonfiction.

Typically, second-grade classrooms will feature baskets of books on animals (wolves, spiders, snakes, and so forth), weather (tornadoes, hurricanes, twisters, and so forth), planets, plants, and habitats (trees, fruits, rain forests, deserts, and so forth), and dinosaurs. If your nonfiction library in December dealt with these topics, it makes sense to shop for new books on the same topics that are a level higher than existing volumes. However, it is important to get slightly *easier* books if the topic is new. While shopping for new books this month, keep in mind that a child can read a just-right book on a topic she may be familiar with—like cats. But if that child decides to read books on a topic about which she has no foreknowledge, like gemstones, it will benefit her to begin with books that are easier than her just-right reading level. As she builds up her vocabulary and background knowledge about gemstones, she'll move on to reading with success books that are at her just-right level (or slightly above that level). You will want to review the books in your library, asking, "For my L/M readers, what leveled books do I have? What topics do I have? Do I know topics that might be of interest to these readers? What are some of the science and social studies themes and topics that my readers know?" These questions will help you put together topic baskets that support your second graders. Consider partnering with a colleague in the third grade and another in first grade with whom you'll share your books—right now, you'll need the books, but later in the year your colleagues may need to borrow some of your easier texts to introduce their students to new content and build conceptual understanding.



While stocking your nonfiction library in preparation for this month, you will also want to look at subtopics within a larger theme. If your existing nonfiction library contains a couple of well-thumbed books on mammals (such as whales and bears), for example, you might prepare a topic basket containing new volumes on *other* mammals (such as apes and seals) to allow children to compare and contrast something new with what they have read previously. Similarly, if a topic basket already contains books on tornadoes and hurricanes, you might shop for additional books on tsunamis or for books about a specific historic hurricane or tsunami. Layering various aspects and dimensions of a topic next to one another in one book basket will set children up for deeper thinking and inquiry as well as scaffold their climb into higher reading levels.

You'll also want to keep the fiction areas of your library open and set aside some time daily for reading just-right chapter books. Likely, your children have fallen in love with characters and series, and the reading they have done in these kinds of books goes a long way toward helping them become stronger, more confident readers and growing into increasingly more challenging texts.

As you and your students collect texts, you will want to remember that many of your students should be poised to move up text levels within this unit. This is the second unit on nonfiction reading, so they should have developed proficiency by now. Then, too, they'll be reading a bunch of texts on topics of interest. They'll probably read the easier texts first, and those texts will provide readers with the domain-specific vocabulary and the conceptual knowledge they need to be able to comprehend more challenging texts. They'll also be reading alongside other inquirers, and the conversations around shared texts provide the same sort of scaffolding provided during guided reading sessions. Then, too, you can take any text-set inquiry group and think of that group as a guided reading group, working with them to be sure they have the requisite skills to read texts of increasing difficulty.

## About Reading Clubs

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If you had your children in series reading clubs last month as the TCRWP scope and sequence suggests, and it went well, you can skip this section. If you are new to the idea of reading clubs, you may want to read this section to learn the nuts-and-bolts information that will help them succeed.

Just as reading workshops always aim to do, reading clubs allow children to function like real readers do. Aren't there times in your life when you've decided to start a project of some kind, and you gather a bunch of books on the topic and read them with another person or two? Perhaps you even do this as part of your ongoing professional development at your school—you decide, for example, that your focus for the year will be on improving your reading conferences, and you and your inquiry group read a bunch of books on the topic and meet monthly to talk about it. Reading clubs

put the natural social aspect of reading at the forefront and help make our reading workshops even more engaging and more fun.

In her book *Reading for Real: Teaching Children to Read with Joy, Power, and Intention*, Kathy Collins explains that a reading club is “a couple of kids reading and talking about a small collection of books that go together in some way. During a cycle of reading clubs, partners choose a reading club of interest that contains books they can read, and they determine their own purposes and plans” (p. 20). She goes on to clarify in Chapter Two that:

- A reading club is formed around a basket of books that has been collected because the books relate to one another in some way.
- A reading club doesn’t involve a particular task, other than reading and talking about books.
- Reading clubs aren’t a permanent daily structure of every reading workshop period all year, but instead are used a couple times a year for two to four weeks at a time.
- In a reading club, readers partner with other children who are reading at about the same reading level and have the same or similar interests.
- Partners read and talk about texts in their reading clubs, and then they ponder questions, develop ideas, develop theories, celebrate discoveries, and so on.
- The work that students do in reading clubs allows them to become experts on their topics and increases their comfort and familiarity with different kinds of texts and reading strategies.
- Club and partnership work are teacher-supported as the teacher confers with individuals, partners, and club members.
- Reading clubs are in addition to, not instead of, daily independent reading.

Remember that the Common Core State Standards call for collaborative conversations within student groups in which members observe certain protocols of “following agreed-upon rules of discussion” and “building on others’ talk in conversations” by “linking their comments to the remarks of others.” Students are also expected to “ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.” At the very start of the month, you’ll want to remind children of the rules and protocols that you expect reading clubs to uphold. You will want to revise your charts to spotlight ways of growing more content in

clubs rather than solely focusing on behaviors. Display these tips prominently in the room. For example, your chart may say:

- When a club member wants to enter the conversation, we. . . .
- Club members listen and help to clarify what other members say.
- Club members try to help build on one another's ideas.
- When a club member cites evidence from text, we. . . .
- Club members help one another ask and answer questions by. . . .

## Launching the Unit

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In *Reading for Real*, Kathy Collins likens reading clubs in the primary grades to being part of a band that gets together for a jam session. In a jam session, she writes, the musicians each get together and start by sharing some of what they've been working on alone. They've come to the group with some new way the chorus could go, a new chord progression, a new thought about ending the piece. The session is one filled with energy and joy. Every member is grateful for the collaboration, because without one another they may end up with just a bunch of their own notes, but now they have a piece of music. Tell your students that they're going to be like musicians—reading nonfiction independently and then coming together to share. Together, they'll get smarter about the topics that are interesting to all of them, and together they'll come up with new thoughts, ideas, and questions.

Just like a band comes together because they have a shared musical ability and a love of the same genre of music, the readers in your class will come together not only because they read on about the same level but also because of the topics they are curious about and authentically want to pursue. You may consider having readers circle the classroom with a clipboard, interview questions, or a list of topics that will be discussed in book baskets in hand, asking other students, "I'm looking for a few other kids who like wolves. Do you want to learn more about wolves?" or "Which of the following topics sounds most interesting to you: whales, plants, or simple machines?"

Once you've organized your students into groups of two, three, or four, you could have their first task as a club be to begin work on a "Reading and Analyzing Nonfiction" (RAN) chart that Tony Stead mentions in his book *Reality Checks*. You could create a big board (perhaps by using an opened legal-sized manila folder) on which you head columns with "What I Think I Know," "Oops!," "Yes!," "New Information," and "Wondering." The club could meet and talk about the things they *think* they know about the topic. This helps them activate prior knowledge but is different from a KWL chart, on which the first column is meant to contain information the student is *sure* he

knows. Here, the idea they think they know will launch club members into an exploration to confirm (yes!), revise (oops!), add (new information), and question (wondering). This board could become a living part of the work the group does as they move Post-its from one column to another.

Remember, as always, that about one week prior to the start of the unit, you'll begin a nonfiction read-aloud and perhaps also a nonfiction shared reading book, so kids get into the mindset of the new unit. Consider that your read-aloud can function as a maxiversion of a club—choose a set of books that go together in some way and plan to read several of them aloud. During conversations, mentor children in the kind of independent talk you hope they will initiate in their club. As you mentor their conversations, exemplify the kind of independent thinking you want them to do as they read. Choose a highly engaging topic—maybe something gross or really cool—that will have children on the edge of their seats. Your challenge will be to find books whose density of information doesn't make it too difficult for children to process and visualize as you are reading them aloud.

## Unit Parts

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### *Part One: We Know How to Be Strong Nonfiction Readers, and Now We Can Do That with Our Club*

This part is all about reminding children that they already know a lot about how to read nonfiction and that it's time to switch from thinking about characters to reacting to that nonfiction mindset. Bring out your old nonfiction charts. Remind children of all they know. For a start, your students know that the most essential, foundational thing they can do as nonfiction readers is to monitor for meaning and learn what the author is trying to teach. Nonfiction readers do this in a number of big ways. We think about how to read nonfiction fluently and with intonation, using our voices to convey that everything the author has to say is the most interesting thing we've ever heard. Your students know, too, that our work as nonfiction readers is to determine the main idea of a section and to think about what supporting details go with that main idea. They know to care about the specific words an author uses and to make it a habit to try to use the language that they learn in their books in their talk. During this unit, they will talk with not just one partner but with their whole club.

In this part, as the Common Core State Standards suggest, you'll revisit some of the key standards in the Informational Text portion of the document. You'll be teaching children to "know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons)," "to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently," "identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text," and "determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 2 topic or subject area."

Just as the Common Core State Standards are designed as a spiral, this part essentially deepens the base of nonfiction strategies that you introduced previously. While reiterating December's teaching points, you can add tips that clarify and deepen the essential work you want readers to be doing. For instance, "Nonfiction readers read with explaining voices" is a teaching point you taught in December while working on fluency and intonation. In this part you will reteach it, but halfway through the workshop you may also announce, "We don't just read with explaining *voices*; nonfiction readers, in fact, do actually explain the text to ourselves as we go along—we pause after a few words and explain whatever we've read to ourselves, using our own words if we can. It's almost like the explaining voice in our head is a real teacher who makes sure we understand each section before moving on. This will not only help us understand the text better but also prepare us to talk with and teach our other club members about our topics." Even as you teach children to parse and use intonation as they read, you can also prompt them to monitor for meaning.

Since the texts that students are reading have gotten more complex than those they could read two months ago, you'll want to tweak some of the teaching points and add to others to more closely match the work that's possible and helpful to do in these harder texts. When students read nonfiction earlier in the year, each book was probably about a single topic. If a book was divided into subcategories of information, the subcategories were very clear. Now, students will be grappling with different types of text structures and layouts, ones that may demand that they be more flexible with the kinds of strategies they use for determining the main idea.

For example, where before you may have taught your students to be on the lookout for section headings to help them figure out what the pages are mostly about, here you may alert them that sometimes the section headings can be a bit clever and it'll take a careful reader to turn one into a main idea. For example, in Binns' book *The Lincoln Memorial* (level K), the section headings clearly identify the topic of the two-page spread: "Building the Memorial" and "Huge Statue" and "Outside the Lincoln Memorial." But in Platt's book *Spiders' Secret* (level M), the headings are "Hairy and Scary" and "Watch Out, Dad!" and "Super Scuba." Also, the sections are not confined to a two-page spread, so readers aren't able to see the heading while reading the entire section. Instead, each section is more like a chapter that spans several pages. You may need to teach children to accumulate more information within a section, perhaps reading page by page and thinking, "How does this page fit with the one before it?" or "What are both of these pages talking about?" Look closely at the books that your children are reading, and decide how you'll support the same kind of skill work (figuring out main idea and supporting details) now that the text has become more challenging.

As children are doing the work of reading to understand what the author is teaching, they now have the support of their club, their "band," and can lean on one another. They can come to their reading club ready to teach others about what they've learned. They can talk about new learning by touching their palm and saying, "The big thing I learned in this book/section today is . . ." and then touch each finger saying,

“For example, for example, for example. . . .” By doing so, they are doing what the Common Core State Standards describes as “identify[ing] the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.”

When children have difficulty teaching what they read, club members can offer support. A big part of monitoring for meaning is knowing when you don’t understand something and then drawing on the tools you have handy to help you understand. Children can bring confusions or misunderstandings to their club and talk to the other members to clarify them. They may start by saying, “In my book it says \_\_\_\_\_, but I don’t really get it. Did your book talk about that?” or “I thought \_\_\_\_\_, but in the book it says \_\_\_\_\_ I don’t get it.”

### *Part Two: In Nonfiction Clubs We Don't Only Learn What the Author Says, We Have Our Own Ideas, Too*

If you began your reading clubs with the RAN chart mentioned in the Launching the Unit section, your children have by now likely collected more main ideas and information, such as content-specific vocabulary words. At this point you want to teach them to alter the facts they thought they knew on new sections of the chart as they confirm or revise their knowledge. They will also come up with new thoughts, ideas, and questions as they continue to explore their topic.

You may begin this part by saying, “Since the beginning of this month, each of you has showed me and one another how you’re careful nonfiction readers. You’ve done strong nonfiction reading by thinking about the main idea, reading with fluency, and learning new vocabulary. You’ve talked with the members of your club to make sure you’re sure about what you’re learning, and you’ve really talked about what the author is trying to teach you. Now we’re going to start making some of our own inferences based on the information in the books we’re reading. Remember when we were studying characters last month in our series clubs? We talked about how we don’t want to just retell our stories to our clubs. That’s a good start to the conversation, sure, but then we need to talk about our *ideas*, too. We need to come with our own thinking about character traits, theories about the story, or maybe even ideas about what lessons we’re learning from the book. Well, this next week or so, we’re going to be doing the same thing in nonfiction. We’re still going to be coming to our club meetings with information that we’ve found fascinating, but now we’re also going to talk about our own thinking and reactions to the information.”

Over the course of this part, you’ll share a handful of teaching points you selected to help your children do this well. You might read some nonfiction books at the levels your students are reading, and think, “What is it that I do to have my own ideas, my own thinking about these books? *How* do I infer when reading factual information?” One way we infer is by reacting to the information in the books we read. Once we understand what the author is saying, we mull over that new bit of information and our reaction to it—eventually landing on an inference. For example, imagine you read



about how emperor penguin eggs will crack if they touch the ice for even a few seconds. You might think, “Wow. It’s amazing that penguins know this and are so careful to keep the egg safe. It must be hard to roll the egg from the mother penguin to the father penguin and keep it off the ground.” Notice that the inference comes after the reaction. Likewise, you’ll want to encourage your children to push past just “wow” and instead explain their thinking using details from the text.

We also want to teach our students to be flexible thinkers. They enter a book confident of what they know about the topic. However, as they read, rather than holding firm to their preconceived beliefs, we encourage them to be open to learning more and revising their thinking if needed. In some cases, this means confirming what they knew and adding to their knowledge with related information from the book. In other instances, it means taking what they thought they knew and explaining why they had the misconceptions they did. This can also help them grow new ideas. During their club meetings, they may use sentence starters like those below to share their new understanding and ideas:

- I used to think . . . but now I’m thinking. . . .
- My new thinking about . . . is different because. . . .
- I thought I knew something about . . . but then I read this part that says . . . so now I think. . . .
- I was right about . . . and I also learned . . . so now I think. . . .

As your young readers learn to ask questions of their text, you might teach them some questions that almost always lead to deeper thinking, such as: “How do . . . ?” “Why do . . . ?” “How come . . . ?” “Why would . . . ?” Pursuing a question in a single book and, especially, in several related books, can drive a child’s or club’s reading. Imagine a club reading through all of their insect books looking for the answer to this question: “Do all insect legs make noise like cricket legs do?” Even if the club members don’t find the answer, they can use the information they do find to suggest a possible answer. This requires that they’re able to synthesize related information to form ideas. They might then say, “Well, since it says here . . . I’ll bet. . . .” Asking and answering questions is tied to the Common Core State Standards suggesting that second graders should be able to “ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.”

You might also teach readers to embed their thinking about the text by making their own picture captions or adding to existing captions. Perhaps a reader first discovers that cats carry their babies in their mouths, moving the babies when they sense danger. After reading and studying the picture of the kitten in the cat’s mouth, she may include her thinking about and deepen her understanding of the text by adding,

"Cats know just how to carry the baby so it isn't hurt. It doesn't hurt the kitten, the kitten isn't afraid when the mother cat does this." Or, "Only mother cats carry kittens. Father cats don't do anything to help care for the kittens." Adding these captions will take your children even further in understanding and developing new ideas.

Another crucial strategy as students encounter new information and concepts in nonfiction reading is visualizing. Your students can gather information by looking at the illustrations in the text, recalling images they have seen in other books, and using their imaginations to create movies in their minds as they read. You may want to model how readers create a movie to add to their information by reading a bit of text out loud and then walking children through how you create a visual of that text in your mind. For example, if you read a page that says, "The polar bear swims up under the seal," you can share with children that you picture a seal treading water obliviously. The waves are quiet, until suddenly, a polar bear bursts through the surface of the water, scaring away the unsuspecting seal. The goal is that children are able to envision no matter what they read. As they read about an eagle building a nest, we want them to see the eagle flying through the air and dipping down to collect twigs in its beak. As children read about flowers, we want them to see the flower's roots soak up water and nutrients from the soil, as well as the growth from seed to blossom. Partners can help each other envision, using gestures and facial expressions and pointing out things in pictures to each other as they read to help create a more complete visualization of what is happening in the text.

You may decide to teach your more advanced students to infer and connect by asking them to express why what they are learning is important and then think about a project they might do either alone or with their club to act on what they've learned and thought about. (This is difficult work; not all your students will make this move at this point in the year.) For instance, a child who is learning about polar bears might decide that it is unfair that the polar bears are losing their homes because the ice caps are melting. Perhaps she'll want to make some posters at home to let others know that we can help our environment, which helps global warming, which helps the polar bears still have a home. A child who is learning about insects might decide that the classroom should contain a terrarium with insects. A child who is learning about flowers may decide to plant flowers at home or at school. Children's ideas about the importance of what they are learning can thus be expressed as ethical concerns and/or as action plans.

### *Part Three: In Nonfiction Clubs We Can Compare and Contrast Information about Our Topics*

It's likely that your children have already done some comparing and contrasting in the last two parts. Perhaps, for example, two different readers shared information from two different books about snakes: "My book says. . . ." "That's weird, because my book says. . . ." Or perhaps they compared information within the same book:

“On this page it talks about . . . but here, it says. . . .” In this new part, you’ll take advantage of that work and the fact that each club has likely moved on to a second or third basket of books by now, which means they’ll be able to compare, contrast, and synthesize information. As the Common Core State Standards outline, they’ll have the opportunity to “describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts” and “compare and contrast two texts on the same topic.”

Once children have read a number of books on a topic, they’ll begin by comparing information and move on to contrast it. Finally, they’ll take on the sophisticated work of synthesizing. To model this, you might draw on examples from a class topic, comparing a new fact with something you already know, activating prior knowledge. Imagine your class is studying chimpanzees. You may read from a book, pause, and say, “Chimpanzees use tools to get food. That is a lot like people who live in the wilderness and set traps to catch food.” That is, you’ll model how to compare a similarity between two species.

Then, too, you could teach your children to compare ideas within texts. For instance, “Chimpanzees use tools to trap and eat ants. They also use tools to construct their nests. Chimpanzees use the *same* materials for *different* purposes. In one way, they use tools to gather food, in another they build their habitat.” This work is so closely related to contrasting that contrasting will often come up as a natural counterpart. Second graders are naturals at noticing and commenting on differences.

Alternatively, you could start by reading a section of your class text together. Imagine you read a section about gibbons who use stones to crack the husks of fruit. Model your observation: “So gibbons just started using tools recently, but I just read that chimpanzees have been using them for a long time. Animals must be getting smarter the longer they are around!”

You’ll teach your readers that when we notice differences it’s helpful to identify them first, then consider what makes two things different, and finally think about what might explain the differences. For example, if the praying mantis has six thin, green, twiglike legs and the beetle has six short, black, spiky legs, then one thing we might consider is how these differently shaped and colored legs are helpful to each of these two insects. We may say that the praying mantis has twiglike legs to blend into trees while the spiky-legged beetle can tightly grip or hold on to leaves. As your clubs compare and contrast the information in their books, be sure to support them as they incorporate more nuanced language to describe information they are comparing and contrasting. For example, your chart could look this:

- On this page . . . but on this page. . . .
- In this book . . . but in this book. . . .
- The difference between . . . and . . . is. . . .
- What’s the same about these two . . . is. . . .

- Unlike the . . . in this book the . . . does [doesn't]. . . .
- When we were learning about . . . we learned . . . but now that we're learning. . . .

Teach children to look across their Post-its and ideas, either on the same page or across pages. First help kids imagine how their ideas or information fit together. Have them place their Post-its side by side. Then have them ask themselves (and their partners), "How are these the same and how are these different?"

As they come up with new ideas, you will want to teach them to read on, to see whether the information fits with their new thoughts and/or ideas. The Post-its will help kids compare information across books.

As children find parts in their books that fit together, you'll teach them how to talk about and compare the parts that are similar. Inevitably, as children find and note similarities, they'll discover differences, too, or at least will engage in a conversation about differences. Help kids lay out their texts and Post-its side by side so they can move easily between the texts and pages, citing examples and thoughts. Sometimes when partners work together, they forget to go back and read from the text to give an example. Teach kids to prompt one another by saying, "Where does it say that? Is there another example? Prove it!"

Perhaps one child will note the similarity between octopuses, which hide in caves, and turtles, which hide in hard shells. After this observation all the kids in the club can discuss the idea that some animals aim to hide and protect themselves. Kids could then open their books or find other texts that support (or refute) the idea. One child might say, "Yeah, these fish hide in the coral. They all hide in places with hard stuff." Then another child might ask, "Is that always true?" As a group, the kids in the club could try either to prove their theory right or to find something that proves their theory wrong.

As students think and talk about the information they discover in their books, you might suggest that they use words like *always*, *sometimes*, *never*, *rarely* or *all*, *most*, *many*, and *few* to explore theories. You can also suggest that they rekindle some of the skills they use in science for observation, such as describing what something looks like in detail. Children might observe and read closely by thinking about the size, quantity, or description of what something looks like. As they look closely and name things, coach them to raise questions like, "How is that important?" or "Why is that happening?"

When reading clubs meet, you can up the ante for accountable talk by reinforcing what children already know and helping them apply it to nonfiction. Get children into the habit of thinking and talking about the answers to questions such as, "Why is it important to know about \_\_\_\_\_?" or "What does the author mean by that?" Encourage your students to summarize their ideas by saying things like, "This teaches me . . .," "I've learned that . . .," or "I think the author wants us to know. . . ."

As you wind down this last part, you will want to spread the excitement that comes from preparing to share all the new learning you and your children have done during the month. Clubs that are interested in making a project out of their learning

might pursue a question such as, “How do different animals care for their babies?” Then they can either reread books they’ve already read during this unit or read new ones (or both) to attempt to answer their question. Club members can mark pages that answer their question and present their findings to another club or to a class of kindergartners or fifth graders. The presentation might feature a table or a chart or a diagram. For example, the club investigating whether various animals care for their young might create a chart that features animals that don’t care for their young (sea-horses, turtles, spiders) and animals that do (birds, cats, alligators). This club could then extend its study by coming up with a chart of the ways animals care for their young, such as carry them, feed them, and protect them.

Some clubs may find that the differences they discover between one animal and another (or one plant and another) are more subtle. For example, one club that pursued the question “How do animals use their tongues?” discovered that cats and giraffes both have a long, rough tongue. But cat tongues are rough so that they can clean and groom themselves, just as people groom ourselves with a hairbrush, while giraffe tongues are rough so they can eat tough leaves. Cat tongues are long to get to hard-to-reach places on their bodies, while giraffe tongues are long to reach high up in the trees for the leaves.

## Unit Celebration

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By now, your children are filled to the brim with information, ideas, and theories. They’ve learned volumes about different topics that excited them from the start, and chances are they’re even more excited now. Instead of letting all of that knowledge go underground, think about ways they might spread their thrill of learning about a particular topic to other kids in the class. Think about how you might get children who shied away from certain baskets earlier in the year excited about the stuff that’s in there—perhaps by having students from a club that studied that topic become the teachers.

Toward the end of the unit, children will share the expert knowledge they grew as a club and will reflect on how and why others might need to know this information. Kids in one club could get together with kids in another club and teach one another about their topics. You might have a “museum” share in which visitors come to each reading club to hear what children have learned. During these shares, the kids in each club will assume the role of instructors, teaching the information from the texts they have read.

## Word Study/Phonics

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In keeping with the Common Core State Standards, you will want to make sure your students can recognize and read irregularly spelled high-frequency grade level words.

<b>If you decide to teach . . .</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Words Their Way</i>, 4th edition</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons Grade 2</i> (Pinnell and Fountas)</b>
Long vowel spelling patterns	6-2 to 6-15 (pp. 189–199)	SP3 to SP6 (pp. 173–188) SP9 (pp. 197–200), SP11 (pp. 205–208) SP13 to SP15 (pp. 213–224) SP17 (pp. 229–232)
Diphthongs and ambiguous vowels	Adapt 5-19 (p. 164) 6-7 to 6-8 (pp. 193–194) 6-11 to 6-15 (pp. 195–199)	LS9 (pp. 103–106) LS21 (pp. 151–154) SP10 (pp. 201–204)
High-frequency words	pp. 182–183	HF1 to HF9 (pp. 235–270)

You might group students according to the words they still need to know so that they can tackle them together. Teach students how to study these words so that they can read them with automaticity in continuous text. A routine you might teach students is to say the word, cover it, write the word, and check it.

At this point in the year, students are also encountering more multisyllabic words in their reading. The Common Core State Standards recommend that students be able to decode two-syllable words by the end of second grade. You will want to help students use what they have learned about words and how they work to problem-solve these multisyllabic words. At first, you will want to teach students that every syllable must have a vowel sound. You'll do this to help kids understand how you break up a word into syllables. You might work on this at first in an isolated, explicit way and then move on to show students how to break up unfamiliar words into syllables as they are reading. Specifically, during shared reading, you might say, "Break the word into parts or cover the parts of the word as you move your eyes from left to right or read the word part by part."

## Additional Resources

Your children are coming off the heels of series reading clubs, which is often a favorite unit, and you will want to continue the momentum. As you get ready to launch nonfiction reading clubs, keep in mind that nonfiction may be more challenging for some of your children but that some children prefer nonfiction and find it easier to discuss.

You may want to refer to your conferring notes from Unit Four, Reading Nonfiction, Reading the World, to remember which students were particularly strong nonfiction readers and which seemed to need more support. Also make a quick list of the skills and strategies you taught most in the last nonfiction unit. Chances are your



students will still need support with these now that they will be reading nonfiction again, so you may decide to adapt the plans that follow to match your students' needs. For example, if you look through your conferring notes and see that you worked with students again and again on fluent nonfiction reading, chances are your students will benefit from some reminders of those lessons. You might plan a string of two or three minilessons right at the start of the unit to remind kids of the work they did in the last unit, to get things up and running again.

We invite you to make adaptations and accommodations accordingly, using the teaching points that follow as a starting point. We hope you will pull from all kinds of data sources to make your plans—running records, observations from read-alouds and shared reading, book logs, and more.

## **Part One: We Know How to Be Strong Nonfiction Readers, and Now We Can Do That with Our Club**

- “Today I want to teach you that we need to come to our clubs prepared to talk about our topics. One way we can do this is to really listen to the text. We don’t just read with explaining *voices*; nonfiction readers, in fact, actually explain the text to ourselves as we go along—we pause after a few words and explain whatever we’ve read to ourselves, using our own words if we can. It’s almost like the explaining voice in our head is a real teacher who makes sure we understand each section before moving on. Then we will be ready to explain and talk in our clubs about our topic.”
- “Today I want to teach you that we need to come to our club ready to talk about the main ideas about our topic. We can figure out the main idea by noticing the *who* and the *what* of the page or part. This helps us name the subject and the action as we read. To find the main idea, we can think, ‘What’s the relationship between the *who* and the *what*?’ and ‘How can I say this main idea as a sentence?’”
- “Today I want to teach you that club members don’t just ‘read’ information to one another. We explain and discuss it. Careful nonfiction readers always try to put what we’ve read into our own words. We might read a bit, then put the text down and say, ‘What the author is saying is that . . .’ or ‘What this means is. . .’ This will help us prepare to talk in our clubs later.”
- “Today I want to teach you that nonfiction readers have read closely to find the main ideas in the text. We read the first sentence of a paragraph and ask, ‘What is this saying?’ Then we read on, sentence by sentence, asking, ‘How does this fit with what’s been said so far?’ to help us find the main idea. Readers take the sentences we’ve read and say what we learned in one short statement.”

- D *Tip:* “Readers of nonfiction can think about the topic of the whole book and the subtopic of the section. Then, as we read the sentences on the page, we can think, ‘What’s the part of the larger topic this section is dealing with? What does the author want me to think, know, or understand about that subtopic?’”
- D *Mid-Workshop Teaching Point:* “Readers are on the lookout for when our book switches topics. We know that sometimes there isn’t a heading that will alert us to the change, and instead we should think, ‘What part of the main topic is this dealing with? Is it the same or different from the last page?’”
- D *Teaching Share:* “Sometimes the author is being clever with the section heading and we need to figure out what the section is *really* about. We can read each sentence and think, ‘How does this fact fit with the heading?’ Then, at the end of the page or section, we can retile that section with a heading that makes sense.”
- “Today I want to teach you that we can come to our clubs with confusions or misunderstandings and talk to the other members of the club to clarify them. We may start by saying what we read in our book and explaining what’s confusing. Then, the other members in the club can talk back to the questioning member to explain or ask further questions to help fix up the confusion.”

## **Part Two: In Nonfiction Clubs We Don’t Only Learn What the Author Says, We Have Our Own Ideas, Too**

- “Readers can have reactions to the information presented in our books. We can think about how we feel when we read a section or part of our book, and make a statement about what our response is. We can say, ‘That is really important because . . .,’ ‘This part makes me feel . . .,’ or ‘This seems really surprising because. . . .’”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers can use our skills of envisioning what the author is saying to really think about the information being presented. We can read a fact on the page and look at the picture. Then we can make the picture move like a movie by reading more facts on that same page. As we see what the author says, we can say what we think about what we see.”
- “To get ideas, readers don’t just let the facts fly over our heads. Today I want to teach you that we really try to understand and imagine what we’re learning. When we do this, we can think about why this information matters, and what our own thoughts about the information are.”

- “Today I want to teach you that readers can use sentence starters with question words to help us get ideas. We can ask a question and then push ourselves to answer it. We can use words like, ‘How do. . . ?’ and ‘Why do. . . ?’ and ‘How come. . . ?’”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers can share our revised thinking with our club members. We can take a fact that we have in the ‘I think I know’ column of our RAN chart and move it based on what we’re now learning. This new information can also help us have an idea.”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers can make our own captions or add to existing captions in the book. We can put together what the author tells us, what the picture tells us, and our own thoughts.”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers can make plans alone or with our club members to take action based on the ideas in our books and our reactions to them. We can think about how we can make a real-world difference based on what we’re learning.”

### **Part Three: In Nonfiction Clubs We Can Compare and Contrast Information about Our Topics**

- “Club members can compare information in our nonfiction books to what we know in our own lives. Today I want to teach you that we can think about what the book says, and compare it with something similar in our own lives. By comparing these two bits of information, we can come to a new conclusion about the topic we’re studying.”
- “Today I want to teach you that club members can talk about differences in the information we’re learning. We can think about why they are different and then what might explain those differences. This can help us come to new understandings about our topics.”
- “Today I want to teach you that club members can use prompts to push our thinking as we compare and contrast. We can say, ‘On this page . . . but on this page . . .’ or ‘In this book . . . but in this book . . .’; ‘The difference between . . . and . . . is . . .’; ‘What’s the same about these two is . . .’; and ‘Unlike the . . . in this book, the . . . in that book does [doesn’t]. . . .’”
- “Today I want to teach you that club members can compare and contrast two different kinds or parts of the same larger topic.”

- *Example:* “We can think about what’s the same and what’s different about two different kinds of mammals or fish or plants. We can think about the parts of our topic and how parts are the same and different.”
- *Tip:* “Sometimes we find these parts and kinds within a single book, and sometimes we look at two or more books.”
- “Today I want to teach you that readers can think about how often information shows up in many books on one topic. We can use words like *always*, *sometimes*, *never*, *rarely*, *all*, *most*, *many*, and *few* to talk about our ideas.”



## UNIT SEVEN

# Reading and Role Playing

## *Fiction, Folktales, and Fairy Tales*

**APRIL/MAY**

**(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: L/M)**

It's spring, a time for fresh starts. You will want to imbue this time of year with a sense of promise and possibility and stir your young readers to new levels of imagination and passion. It's easy to succumb to the winter blues—it's all the more important now to bring renewed cheer and energy to your classroom. For this reason, we have chosen an incredibly special unit of study, one we're certain both you and your kids will love.

In this unit, you will invite your readers into the world of acting and directing, as well as the world of fairies, princesses, and witches. This unit combines two of last year's units into one extended six-week course. Our rationale: there is a playful yet vital relationship between reading and drama. When we read, we embody the character, see through his or her eyes, direct ourselves in that role. As we elicit more feeling, expression, and gestures, what we are really doing is putting ourselves into the drama of the story. This means coming to understand it in richer ways. And what stories are more dramatic than fairy tales? Think of the possibilities: the heightened acts of good and evil, quests and magic, chants and incantations. Think what fun children will have acting out the contemptible, cackling witch or the wise, eccentric fairy godmother.

Of course, most of you probably don't have enough fairy tales and folktales in your classroom library to sustain the independent reading your children will be doing. Therefore, this unit doesn't feature only these old tales. What we're imagining instead is that you might weave them throughout the unit (at least the second portion), in part during your read-alouds and in part alongside the fiction your children will also

be reading. The Common Core State Standards state that second graders need to be able to “recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and to determine their central message, lesson, or moral” and also to “compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story (e.g., Cinderella stories) by different authors or from different cultures.” Because many contemporary stories have roots in fairy tales, folktales, and fables, having children read fiction and these tales side by side will open up the work of thinking across archetypes, big messages, and authorial intent. The hope is that children will hone their skills of comprehension by critiquing and analyzing multiple perspectives and comparing and contrasting characters, storylines, morals, and lessons.

The invitation for children to become actors and directors, though thrilling, will kick off a unit of serious work. You will be teaching your students to read closely, asking key investigative questions in an effort to infer characters’ roles and their impact on the story’s bigger meaning. You’ll help readers envision as they read, imagining the worlds of the stories, setting the stage for when they act. You will especially help readers cultivate fluency by having them read aloud repetitively, each time with increasing authority and intonation. Tim Rasinski, an expert on reading fluency, has helped us realize that during second grade, children’s rate of reading needs to progress from approximately 30-to-50 words per minute (in short two- or three-word phrases) in the fall to reading more like 70-to-100 words per minute (in longer phrases) in the spring. This means it is especially important for second graders to read more quickly; of course, it is also important to read expressively, with intonation that suggests and supports comprehension. As your readers develop their characters through dramatization, they will be exploring point of view and discovering how different characters—and authors, too—can see the same events differently. This supports Common Core State Standard 6 for grade 2 literature: the ability to “acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.”

We imagine you will want to support reading clubs during this unit. First, though, you may consider channeling your energy and attention to supporting partnerships. Pairs of students can dramatize a scene, talk about the characters, or share some of the ideas they jotted on Post-its. You may choose to use the actor analogy, teaching your students that actors take notes as they read, marking places where they will change their voice or move their bodies in ways that match the emotions of a character. Partnerships might take on the personas of Iris and Walter, Pinky and Rex, Frog and Toad, or Goldilocks and the Three Bears. You might then parlay this energy into book clubs. Once clubs are formed, members might choose a few favorite books or sections of books. You might assign each club member a part, or role. Children could then engage in a variation of reader’s theatre. These club meetings will take the place of partnerships and will last only five or ten minutes a day, so as not to encroach on independent reading. Instead, clubs will vitalize independent reading, which will now involve preparation for the club meetings. We believe that this kind of preparation and accountability to partners and clubs will greatly increase your students’ ability to



talk and think about their books. In addition, the conversation that follows these enactments will support your children as they meet the speaking and listening standards delineated in the Common Core State Standards. All of this reading and rereading will be a terrific help to readers who are trailing in fluency, prosody, and phrasing.

Again, you will want to keep in mind that readers who were assessed in March may well be ready to move up to the next level. You want to be sure that all readers are making a year's growth. If kids entered at level J, they should be at level L, approaching M. If kids entered above grade level, around level M, many of those readers will be at level O, approaching P. If you have students who entered below grade level, around level F or G, those readers should also have made great gains in the year. Many of those readers should be at level K, working toward L. Some of them will be ready to move up to another level of text difficulty. Keep your eye on trying to move kids up the levels of text difficulty. The good news is that they'll be reading fiction books this whole month—so now is a good time to think about making those books more challenging for those who are ready. If you have some readers who have not progressed as you'd expect over the course of the year, now is a good time to blow the whistle, to declare this an emergency, and gather all stakeholders together around an intervention. Does this reader need to spend an hour after school, in the building, reading? Does that reader need to double the amount of reading he or she is doing at home?

## Readers Can Become Actors Too: Stepping into a Character's Shoes—Literally!

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On the first day of the unit you might gather your children and say something like this: "Second graders, I was watching TV with my nephews over winter vacation and guess what show I saw? *Little Bill*! I couldn't believe it. It was the episode 'The Meanest Thing to Say.' What a coincidence! Right after we studied and read so many Little Bill books, our favorite character was live! It was so neat to see the characters come to life that way, moving and talking. I glanced at the cartoon schedule and guess what? There were a couple *other* class favorites, too—Franklin and Little Bear. It made me think that any of our books could become dramas! And you know what—I'm dying to be an actor in one of those shows. Wouldn't you like to be one of those actors?"

Then, you can read aloud a book the class knows well (preferably one that has been made into a cartoon or movie), setting children up to reenact as they listen. You'll want to throw yourself into the dramatization of the book, making facial expressions, gesturing with your hands and shoulders—your whole body if need be—and making your voice change for each character. You'll invite children to join you, not by standing up and moving around as you read aloud, but in their spots on the rug. It is amazing how much acting can be done while sitting in place! You could say something like, "How about if we try it—right here, right now? I'm going to reread the part of *The Meanest Thing to Say* when Little Bill is at home, trying to decide what to do

now that Michael, the new kid at school, has challenged him to think of the meanest thing he could say. So right now, while you are sitting here, will each of you be Little Bill? He's in his kitchen with his great-grandma and his parents. Think about what that looks like. Be the best Little Bill you can be. What does his face look like? Are his arms crossed? Remember, you are trying to think of something really mean to say to Michael." Your read-alouds will carry a good part of the unit. During a read-aloud, you and your students will become actors, using facial expressions and body gestures to look and sound like the character. You can read a passage aloud and then stop: "I feel like I'm practically in the story, don't you? Let's be \_\_\_\_\_. "Show me on your face what you are feeling when you \_\_\_\_\_."

Halfway through the book and again at the end, you can say something like, "Right now think, 'What's Little Bill thinking inside his head?' Partner one, you be Little Bill and say those feelings aloud to partner two. Partner two, you're Dad for now. Turn and talk." As you listen in on these enactments, you may notice that some children think Little Bill is acting obnoxious, while others think Little Bill is just confused. You might decide to use this opportunity to tell children that not all actors interpret a character in the same way. Or you could wait and do this sort of interpretive work another day, during a second or third read-aloud/enactment. If you decide to do it today, you could tell the class that you noticed different children interpreted Little Bill differently, and explain those differences. Then you could say something like "Let's all try imagining this part of the story as being all about how Little Bill becomes more and more obnoxious. I'm going to read it again, and you all play the role of Little Bill, but this time, make him sort of snotty sounding." Then you could reread, suggesting children try out (*try on* might be the more apt term) the theory that Little Bill is more confused than anything.

Of course, any unit of study is really going to be about the work you hope children will do on their own as they read. So after you've engaged the class in a dramatic read-aloud, you could say to them, "Oh my gosh! You all are so good at becoming the character as you read! Which is great, because this month we're going to be reading every story as if we are the characters. We're going to be reading our stories like actors! This means that we're going to step into characters' shoes, thinking as we read, 'I bet she's really mad now,' reading the words that the character says in a mad voice as we furrow our brows and scowl, or, 'I bet he's a little scared in this part,' and then covering a bit, and making our faces look frightened. And we're going to notice when a character's feelings might be changing and make sure that the voice in our head changes along with the character's feelings. Each of you will be doing this work on your own as you read, and later you'll have a chance to act it out with your club."

Your first step will be to teach children to do some preliminary work noticing and interpreting the details that tell us about a character. "Before readers can empathize, before we can role-play our way into a story," you'll tell kids, "we need to read very closely, noticing clues that will help us learn more about the character. What sort of person is this character? Is he serious? Always cracking jokes? What does he like and dislike? What does he really, really want?" Because children will have learned earlier

in the year about the importance of paying close attention to the details that an author provides, you'll have the chance now to remind them of the strategies for doing this that you taught in November. Bring out those old charts on ways to track your character and think about his or her wants and troubles, and remind children of all they know about marking books with Post-its noting things to talk about with their partner. You can tell them that actors, too, keep notes as a way to get inside a character's head and put themselves into that role. By marking up their books, they'll be doing likewise, preparing to bring out the things they notice about the characters in their books.

Next, you can help children not only pay attention to the character and his or her experiences but also analyze how the character is feeling. To do this, your children will probably want to mark places in the books they are reading independently where the character has a strong feeling with which they empathize. When readers meet with their partner, one of the things they can do is to talk about the places where the character felt something especially intensely. The child who has located a passage in which her character went through intense feelings will want to read that passage aloud to her partner, making sure to do this in a way that conveys how the character's feelings are growing with intensity over the course of the passage. The reader will want to read in such a way that her voice rises and falls in tune with the emotional valence. For example, if a reader discovers that a character is feeling angry, she can read that bit of text with a sneer on her face and with a harsh tone of voice.

It may be that the partner questions the idea that the character is angry. If so, that child could reread that part of the text, trying on a new facial expression or tone of voice, one she believes better represents the character's frame of mind. Perhaps this child decides the character is, in fact, nervous, not angry. If so, the child could read the text with a shaky, worried voice. Of course, evoking the character's feelings in a passage will require practice. Multiple, multifaceted readings and coached discussion can make a tremendous difference. Prompt children to support their idea with examples from across the text. Ask them to think of more precise words that more accurately describe the character—"Is he mad or frustrated?" you might ask. This is important work, and you will want to lead into it, helping children notice and describe the nuances of a strong reaction by a character to a major event or challenge. This is a major skill that the Common Core State Standards address.

As you do this work, you will want to think about ways to provide extra support for your struggling readers. To begin, you will want to make sure these children are in same-book partnerships even if others are not. It will be much more helpful if they can work together in a familiar book to identify passages that brim with emotions or notice when a character's emotion begins to change. Together the two partners can decide on the mood with which a passage should be read.

If you have told your readers that in the rush of reading we sometimes have a thought that we want to hold on to to expand on it and share it later, and if you've let them know that one way to hold on to a thought is to jot it on a Post-it note, you may want to suggest that as they listen to you read aloud, if they notice the

character feeling something or if they have ideas about why the character is doing or feeling something, they might jot down a word or two about that on a Post-it. They could then use those Post-its as a prompt when they talk with their partner about the passage you read aloud. (You probably wouldn't want children to listen, talk, and *then* jot on a Post-it; jotting first lets them rehearse their partnership conversations.)

As the unit unfolds, you'll continue to angle your read-alouds to encourage readers to put themselves in characters' shoes, to speak in the voices of characters. "Partner A, pretend you are Junie B. Jones. Talk to partner B as if she's your teacher. Tell your teacher about how you don't want to go on the bus." Then, after a few minutes, you could say, "Partner B, you are the teacher. You are looking at Junie B. What are you thinking? Say your thoughts aloud." You could also have partners predict together what may happen next based on what they know about their characters so far. Of course, this needn't involve one partner being one character and one the other. You might say, "Your right finger puppet is Junie B. Junie B., tell your teacher—your left finger-puppet—why you don't want to ride the bus! Then have your teacher finger-puppet talk back to Junie B." This work could lead to little bits of improvisational drama: "Pretend you are Junie B. You are standing at school, getting ready to talk to your teacher. Your Mom is right beside you. What are you thinking right now? What are you doing? Turn and act."

## Directing Ourselves and Our Club Mates

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We suggest you move children from partnerships to clubs in this second part of the unit. Now that readers have had practice coming to understand characters through deep empathy and envisionment (and a little inference), they'll be ready to lift the level of their enactments and bring out even more emotion. The work they will have done up to now will have been largely close-in role-playing. They will have examined characters by working their way into one role or another. Now you'll invite your children to step out of the character's shoes and put on the hat of the director. "Readers, you know how there's a big ceremony each year that gives out prizes to people who work in movies?" you might say. "Have you ever noticed how the director (that's the person who guides all the actors and camera people) gets his or her prize toward the end of the Oscars? That's because being a director is a really, really big job. So winning best director is a huge deal. Directors have to understand not just how *one* character feels but how *all* the characters feel. Directors have to understand the setting, too, and the sound and visual effects, and how the plot twists and turns, and the ways in which all these different components come together. Directors have to see the big picture." Pause for a moment to let this sink in. Then issue an invitation: "Do you know what I think? I think all of you are ready to be directors. I've watched you these past days and noticed how, even as you're deep into the role of the bully, you're able to step back and say to your partner, 'I think she's more scared than that. Try putting your hands over your eyes and shaking a little.' That's directing! You're noticing not

only how different characters feel but also how they might move their bodies and say their lines—and then you’re giving each other little directions or cues. For the next week or so, we’re each going to have a turn doing more of this big-picture work.”

If you haven’t done so already, you may want to read some fairy tales or folktales aloud. You can model how you go about viewing the scenes and characters through director’s eyes. “Oh I see it!” you might exclaim after reading, “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house down!” the third time the wolf in *The Three Little Pigs* calls it out. “The wolf is getting a bit tired now. He’s trying to be the same intimidating guy he was earlier, but he’s losing steam.” Then you might show kids what that looks like and maybe say, “I bet his cheeks are about ready to burst by now. That’s a lot of huffing and puffing he’s been doing!” Then you might turn to kids and say, “I bet he’s feeling pretty fed up—and hungry, too. If you were directing someone to play the wolf, what would you say to that person? What cues might you give? Turn and talk to your partner.” As kids talk, call out little tips: “What is the wolf feeling right now?” “What does his face look like?” “What about his body?”

Of course, you will want to help readers recognize that identifying a character’s feelings is a great start but that ultimately readers, as directors, want to understand those feelings. This involves asking a question that should always be provocative: *Why?* Of course, readers may just shrug and say, “I don’t know.” And it is almost always the case that we do not know why a character feels as he does, anymore than we know why we feel as we do, but we develop conjectures, we surmise. To do this, we reread, we look for clues, we pose theories, we try out different possible interpretations. Your children will do very few of these things unless you help them see the power of inquiry. Remember that kids will be studying persuasive language in writing workshop as well. You will want to have kids work on citing evidence for the conclusions that they are drawing about their characters. Coach them to have reasons why a character should be dramatized one way versus another.

As you progress through this part of the unit, you’ll be lifting the level of children’s envisionments and enactments. One way to do this is to remind children that readers, like directors, pay attention not only to *what* and *why* a character does things but also to *how* the character does these things. Does the text give any clues about the character’s gestures? About the way a character walks or sits or closes the door? If the text says that a character slumps in the chair, then we need to ask, “Why does she sit like that? Is she tired? Bored? What’s going on?” We also pay attention to the way characters talk; the words they choose, their tone of voice, and the emotional cues the author implies with dialogue. All of these give hints about what kind of people live in the world of a story. Sometimes the author offers a window into a character’s mind; passages may be about a character’s thinking or an explanation of a character’s motives. Characters, like real people, have reasons behind what they do. They are motivated by feelings, situations, and relationships. Some predictable motivations that people and characters have are jealousy, revenge, and fear, to name a few. Children may point out that the text doesn’t always *say* how a character does an action. You’ll want to help them understand that to be a director means that you are always



filling in the gaps of a story as you read by drawing on all you learn from this book, from other books, and from your life.

As this part of the unit unfurls, you'll reach a point when you want to teach readers that we will not all understand characters in the same way. We will have different ideas about why a character feels one way or another or how that character acts. When readers see a pattern throughout the book in the way a character acts, we can say this is a trait of that character. You will want to teach children the difference between a feeling and a trait. Maybe even have a feeling chart and a few trait charts. A character doesn't feel kind but acts in ways that shows he is kind. Because we're often trying to persuade others to see the character as we do, readers need to become accustomed to providing evidence for theories. For instance, "I think in this part she is really sad because she was left behind, no one is with her, and she's also getting scared that she'll be deserted. So I think this part would sound like this." With your help, in time the listening partner will be able to talk back to the first reader, saying something like "You said she was getting scared, but you gotta make her voice sound that way," and then the listening partner will also read the excerpt aloud. Club mates will help hold each other accountable to the text as well as to what they are trying to show in their enactments. The speaking and listening section of the Common Core State Standards expects partners to be able to work on clarification with one another, during both reading and writing work. Bear in mind that your goal for this unit is not only character work but also reading with fluency, prosody, and phrasing; as we have said before, research has shown that reader's theatre and repetitive reading make the world of difference.

## **As Readers Get to Know Characters Better, We Discover Predictable Roles They Play: Understanding the Villain, the Hero, and Everyone in Between**

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In this part of the unit, you'll move from teaching children to step into the shoes of a particular character to helping children think more categorically about characters. You'll teach them that just as there are different personality types in the world, there are different character types in stories. You'll want to teach children that authors sometimes make deliberate choices about which characters in their book will take on which role. One character might be the good guy—the *hero*—while another is the bad guy—the *villain*. And then, of course, there's the sidekick, the wise adviser, the trickster, to name just a few.

While it's true that most second graders won't yet be reading books with a large number of characters—and character types—or much complexity, even simpler books contain identifiable character types. Pairs of friends—Pinky and Rex, Ramona and Howie, Amber and Justin—are common in books for this age, with one friend often being a bit more mischievous or daring. The wise adviser will often be a teacher or a parent, though this role might be played by someone who does, in fact, resemble the



stereotypical quirky sage or fairy godmother—Mrs. Piggie Wiggle, for example, or Mary Poppins. After introducing children to a few archetypes, let them identify others on their own or with their partner. Children will have fun noticing that many of their books contain similar character types and coming up with a list of the different roles their characters play.

Of course, you won't just want children making a list of character types and ticking it off as they read. You'll want them to also think about what it *means* to be one kind of character or another. Are there typical patterns of behavior they observe in one type or another? They might, for example, notice that the main character's sidekick is sometimes funny—that that person's role is to crack jokes. Or maybe the sidekick (or one of a pair of friends) tends to get the main character into trouble over and over, so he is a troublemaker. Earlier in the year, your children will have learned that characters go on journeys and encounter trouble along the way. Now they might notice that friends sometimes contribute to that trouble. Alternatively, the person who creates obstacles for the main character may be someone with a much more deliberate villainous intent—the class bully, for example, or the mean kid next door. As children think about how these roles play out in their books, partners—or two sets of partners—can act out scenes in their books that spotlight the bully or the sidekick or the quirky adviser.

Remind children that as they pay attention to the characters in their books, they can think about the role the character plays to predict what's going to happen. Is the character good or bad? Will she win or will she lose? Teach children to pay attention to the pattern, to ask and answer, "Why is this happening? What will happen next?" Teach children to think about whether a character in the story is the one who is teaching a lesson or learning a lesson. You'll return to this in greater detail in the final part of the unit. For now, it's enough to nudge children to read with an eye toward it.

Now is the perfect time to spotlight the antecedents of the character types they will encounter in their modern-day stories—fairy tales, folktales, and fables. These short moralistic tales are particularly powerful teaching texts in part because they feature characters who have such clearly defined, often exaggerated traits. Children will have an easy time identifying the good guy and the bad guy in these stories—and eventually, other archetypes too. These tales are full of drama, so when you read them aloud—as we suggest you do—be sure to throw some gestures into your performance and give characters distinguishable voices to spotlight what sort of role each one plays. Cackle and act crotchety as the wicked old witch, make your voice light and sweet when you are the hero or the heroine. Meanwhile, encourage your kids to ham it up too as they step into these roles. "Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum!" demands to be spoken in a loud, mean voice. "Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?" will sound more cunning and coy—and will have a singsong quality. Fairy tales and folktales (which originated as oral stories) are full of repetitive chants that your children will love to perform.

After children have heard several tales, they may start to notice that the books they have been reading have similar characters—a bad wolf, a wise old man, an evil step

relation—and that these characters have similar traits. The wise old man has all the answers but makes the main character work to get them; the stepmother in these tales is often evil and goes out of her way to harm the heroine. Readers may also notice that these archetypes sometimes differ somewhat from story to story. For example, the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs* is the villain in both stories, but the wolf in the first story seems smarter than the wolf in the latter. This is the perfect opportunity for you to teach children that fairy tales and folktales are archetypes for modern stories, that characters who play similar roles will pop up again and again, not only in these old tales but in more modern stories, too. Children might notice, “Instead of a wolf, this book has a mean old dragon! Reminds me a little bit of Mean Jean the Recess Queen.” The hope is that children take note of not just the magic in fairy tales and folktales (though of course, that’s part of the fun!), but also the ways in which archetypes from these genres repeat themselves again and again in modern literature, albeit in nonmagical forms. This is the case not only with characters but also with plots, imagery, themes, but for now it’s enough that children come to recognize similar roles across books.

The Common Core State Standards spotlight how important it is that children develop cultural literacy, defined in part as ensuring that children have a common core of knowledge, both about the genre of folktales and fairy tales—that is, about how these texts tend to go—and the folktale and fairy tale archetypes that underlie more modern stories. The notions that there is both good and evil in the world, that people act out of vengeance and jealousy, that a person must struggle to overcome things, that stories contain morals and lessons, are all rooted in these genres. Kids will encounter versions of these storylines and archetypes again and again in their modern-day reading. They will meet characters who are treated unfairly—or who treat others unfairly—humorous sidekicks, wise advisers, admirable heroes, and despicable villains. And, as their books become more complex, they will come across characters who aren’t strictly good or bad but a blend of both: heroes who begin weak and end up strong, kids who are sometimes nice and sometimes mean, villains who redeem themselves by book’s end. The characters in modern-day children’s literature face obstacles and learn lessons, just as the three pigs and Cinderella and countless other characters in these age-old folktales and fairy tales do. As children study the classics to understand these archetypes, therefore, they will benefit on any given day as they read almost any book. This means that introducing your children to these tales will provide a basis for studying plot structure and character types and for searching for morals and lessons in *any* story—as they will do in the next part of the unit.

If you have enough fairy tales, folktales, and fables to supplement children’s independent reading of fiction, by all means nudge children to read some of these tales during reading workshop. These tales offer a crystal clear view of the various archetypes that live in modern-day stories, so being introduced to a few memorable tales will help children learn to think more categorically about characters. What’s more, reading fairy tales and folktales alongside modern-day stories will allow your children to compare and contrast, a skill that the Common Core State Standards spotlight and

that we believe is essential in becoming a more sophisticated reader and thinker. So dust off your old copies of the brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen and bring out the wicked witches, enchanted princesses, talking animals. Read aloud your favorites to children, and throw in the drama when you do!

If you worry that fairy tales and folktales send antiquated messages to children, use this opportunity to bring in a little critical literacy. Ask children what they think about the way girls are featured in *Cinderella* or *Sleeping Beauty*—and then read *The Paper Bag Princess* to introduce an entirely different kind of princess and story. Or you might ask children how they would have played out a particular fairy tale differently if they were the author, and let them imagine what that would look and sound like, maybe acting out a scene with a partner. There are many, many wonderful modern-day fairy tales and new versions of old tales that present different viewpoints. Many countries have their own version of the same story. Some of the many titles we recommend are *Princess Smartypants* and *Prince Cinders* (Babette Cole), *Little Red Riding Hood* (Lisa Campbell Ernsts), *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story from Africa* (Niki Daly), *Cinder Edna* (Ellen Jackson), *Cinder-Elly* (G. Brian Karas), *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* and *The Stinky Cheeseman* (Jon Scieszka), *The Princess Knight* (Cornelia Funke), *The Duchess of Whimsy: An Absolutely Delicious Fairy Tale* (Randall de Sève and Peter de Sève), *Clever Jack Takes the Cake* (Candace Fleming), *Mabela the Clever* (Margaret Read MacDonald), *Mirror Mirror* (Marilyn Singer), and *Spells* (Emily Gravett).

As your children think across both age-old tales and modern literature, they will probably begin to make allusions unknowingly. An allusion is very similar to a text-to-text connection. Readers making a text-to-text connection recognize that something in the book they are reading somehow connects with a story they know from before. An allusion can be more or less complex. For example, when children read *Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late*, they will often note that the bunny on the front cover is the same bunny from *Knufflebunny*, another book written by Mo Willems. More significantly, books can allude to other books. For example, *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs*, by Jon Scieszka, directly alludes to the plot of the original *Three Little Pigs*. Don't worry if your kids don't recognize this on your own (and you may or may not decide to teach it).

## Readers Recognize the Morals, Lessons, and Author's Purpose That Stories Convey

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During the final part of this unit, you'll steer children to think about the lessons authors hope readers will learn. Fairy tales and folktales also anchor this teaching, because they were written to convey morals. You'll teach children, then, that these tales, like other stories they have read, often include a lesson. Readers learn side by side with the characters in these tales, imagining how we might live our own lives differently because of what we and the characters have learned. Fables and fairy tales offer readers the opportunity to think about life lessons at the end. After we have

identified why characters acted the way they did, we can think about what we can learn from their motives. Fairy tales and fables are very moralistic. They teach young readers that greed, jealousy, and revenge are wrong. For example, after reading *I Love My New Toy!*, by Mo Willems, we might ask, “What can we learn from Piggie, who got so angry at Gerald?” We might say, “When we get angry and jump to conclusions, we may hurt our friends’ feelings. We should not get angry quickly, and we should accept apologies from our friends.” Of course, some tales teach lessons with which we don’t agree. Readers can work in partnerships to think about whether a lesson is fair. They can ask themselves, “Do I believe this is a good way to live my life?” or “Was this the best way to teach the lesson?” One little girl, after reading *The Paper Bag Princess*, said, “Why is Ronald mad at her?” Another girl said, “Because he is a boy. Girls don’t save boys.” These statements and conversations can continue the discussion platforms you may have initiated during the prior part of the unit. Mostly, you will want to make sure that kids are thinking and commenting on one another’s thoughts in honest, genuine ways. You need not push any agenda. Make sure that when you are teaching into these conversations it feels real and applicable to kids’ real lives.

Continue to read these tales aloud to your students, perhaps spotlighting ones that convey lessons that are similar to ones children have encountered in the fiction books they’ve read. You can ask children to think about how different authors convey the same lesson or how different authors have opposite views about something. Many children’s books mirror these old tales, so it could be fun for you and the class to make bins of old and new books that go together. If you have multiple versions of Cinderella told by writers from around the world, those might all go into the same bin. Modern versions (*Cinder Edna*, *Cinder-Elly*) might go in that bin too, as could modern-day takes on the story. Have fun with these groupings but don’t force them. If you and children don’t find ways to match new books with traditional tales, come up with new categories: “books about friends that help each other” or “books about kids who save the day.”

Children can also create book baskets based on the lessons and morals books convey. They can discuss how books with similar lessons are the same and different. Partners can then work together to challenge each other’s category choices and consider other baskets that might be more appropriate. Partners can defend their ideas based on the evidence they have gathered in their books. They can also entice each other to read the book and the evidence of a suggested theme or moral. Partners will monitor and question each other, saying things like, “Why do you think it should go there?” or “Did you ever think maybe it is really about \_\_\_\_\_?”

You might want to read some fables aloud and ask children what they think the author wants the reader to learn. Don’t include the little spelled-out moral at the end. Instead, have children turn and talk or work as a class to guess the author’s intent. Arnold Lobel’s *Fables* is full of fun, kid-friendly takes on old (sometimes stale) tales. Fables often offer two differing approaches to life, so they are a perfect vehicle for teaching children to think about various points of view, something the Common Core State Standards emphasizes for second graders. For example, it might be fun for the

class to have a debate in which half the room takes the viewpoint of the tortoise, the other half, the hare. You can ask children to think about why a particular character looks at things one way and then defend that character's viewpoint. Because fables are short, children might also put on little skits in which they bring out the point of view of the character through drama.

After hearing you read many of these tales and reading many others on their own, readers will probably notice that a number of folktales and fairy tales have similarities: good triumphs over evil, selfish or lazy characters learn a lesson. Tell children that many authors of folktales and fairy tales intended their stories to convey a specific moral or a lesson. In *The Three Little Pigs* we learn that anything worth doing is worth doing well, and in *Little Red Riding Hood* we might learn not to follow or listen to strangers. Sometimes the message is highlighted at the end. The story may state, "The moral of this story is \_\_\_\_\_." Other times readers need to determine it ourselves. Either way, we will have to interpret the lesson the character learns or interpret what lesson the author is trying to teach us. Readers can ask ourselves, "What is the author trying to teach me?" or "What lesson did the character learn?" or "How and why did the character change?" We can use what we have learned about the character and think about how the character faced his problems to help us with this. Young readers may find a number of lessons in their books even if a specific moral is highlighted at the end.

Meanwhile, children will continue to read their fiction books, and you'll want to be sure they read them thinking about the lessons they are learning. Remind them that all stories contain lessons, and it is our job as readers to think about what those lessons might be. Perhaps they could take their Post-its from their fairy tale/fable books and attach them to similar passages in their fiction books. Or you could reread parts of a story you've previously read aloud and have the children hold up their fairy tale/fable Post-its when they recognize a similar passage. You might also encourage children to read with a critical lens and start to question their stories. Readers might notice that many fairy tales end with the prince and the princess living "happily ever after" or that "the good guy always wins," and they might comment that this is not always true in life. On the other hand, the modern-day stories they read may not have such happily-ever-after endings, though they may nonetheless end on a positive note, as *Amber Brown Is Not a Crayon* does. Readers can think about the lesson they think the author is trying to teach them and ask themselves, "Do I buy it?" or "Does the good guy always win?" or "Was that the best way to teach the lesson?"

As children read several books that go together, you may want to emphasize the importance of rereading. Often, the first read is more literal; then we make deeper inferences when we reread. You want your young readers to become skilled at talking between texts. The real goal is to light a fire under readers by inviting them to think and talk across books. By inviting children to have a hand in reorganizing the library and thinking about new book baskets, you are opening up more opportunities for them to think about all the ways books can go together.



As the unit begins to wind down, you will want to celebrate the hard work that your students have done by having your children perform a book that they have read and studied. You may decide to have partnerships or clubs do this work together. Have students revisit a story they most care about, not just reading it together but having an extensive talk about it and then presenting it to the class, to their parents, or to whoever you invite to their celebration. Have them rehearse for a day or two first, paying only a little attention to props and much more attention to the tone, facial expressions, and enthusiasm they bring to their reading.

## Word Study/Phonics/Shared Reading

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By this point of the year, you will want either to solidify word study concepts you've already taught or to introduce new and more sophisticated word study concepts. Word study will continue to be more small-group work than whole-class instruction, because this allows you to fine-tune your teaching to the needs of particular students. According to the Common Core State Standards, you will want to make sure your students can decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels and words with common prefixes and suffixes. You will want to give your students plenty of opportunities to practice decoding these words (with some prompting) within their independent reading. Prompts you might use include, "Notice the syllables." "Look at the base word [prefix, suffix]." "Where can you break up the word?" Some students will be ready for this instruction, while others will still need to solidify earlier features in spelling development.

You might spend one or two days determining each student's current stage of spelling development and forming new groups based on your assessments. For example, you may have noticed that some students still need to work on some of the concepts you introduced in the previous months, such as long vowel patterns, while others still need to work on prefixes and suffixes. Both groups can work on sorting words but the content will be different. You'll also want to have students complete some "blind" writing sorts, in which one partner reads the word and the other partner writes it in the correct column. If you haven't done so already, you might also introduce word hunts in which children search their independent reading for concepts they have been working on in word study. If most children are still having difficulty with concepts you taught in the previous months, you might spend the first couple of weeks reviewing those concepts with the whole class.

You may also want to zoom in on reading with expression during shared reading. The most obvious way to do this would be to help readers attend to punctuation. Shared reading is also the time to remind children to orchestrate all they know and use strategies flexibly. Teach them to try one strategy and then another and another until they figure out the word. In addition, you might have children who are getting quite proficient at decoding difficult words but struggle with figuring out the meaning



of the word. Teach them how to use the picture and sentences around the word to look for clues.

Shared reading is also a good time to practice reader's theatre, which increases children's fluency, comprehension, and decoding skills. Prompt students to notice the spelling patterns you have been studying during word study. You may decide to write some reader's theatre pieces during interactive writing and reread these pieces during shared reading!

To support your word study curriculum, below are a few suggested lessons, based on features of spelling in which many second graders tend to need explicit instruction:

<b>If you decide to teach . . .</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Words Their Way</i>, 4th edition</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons, Grade 2</i> (Pinnell &amp; Fountas)</b>
Long vowel spelling patterns	6-2, 6-4 to 6-15 (pp. 189–199)	SP3 to SP6 (pp. 173–188) SP9 (pp. 197–200) SP11 (pp. 205–208) SP13 to SP15 (pp. 213–224) SP17 (pp. 229–232)
Recognizing consonants with two sounds ( <i>c</i> and <i>g</i> )		LS14, LS15 (pp. 123–130)
Prefixes and suffixes	See Adaptable Games (p.220) 7-9 (pp. 226–227)	WS13 to WS18 (pp. 351–374) WS21 to WS22 (pp. 383–390)
High-frequency words	pp. 182–183	HF1 to HF9 (pp. 235–270)



## UNIT EIGHT

# Readers Can Read about Science Topics to Become Experts

MAY/JUNE

(Level 3 Reading Benchmark: M)

The classic image of breakthrough science is that of Galileo eyeing a swinging lamp in church, of Newton lazing under the apple tree, of Archimedes running out of his bath and into the streets, shouting “Eureka!” It was in church that Galileo discovered the pendulum, under a tree that Newton discovered gravity, and in his bathtub that Archimedes discovered how to measure density. It may seem that many scientists “discover” astonishing things alone, during the most mundane of activities. In fact, these scientists, and the generations of scientists that have followed them, are part of a Grand Conversation with other scientists on the issues of the day. They study a topic with determined focus. They live, breathe, and talk about this topic with a community of scientists. They ask questions, develop hypotheses, and devise possible experiments to test these hypotheses—a process we refer to as *the scientific method*.

The vision that drives this unit is equally grand—that of children sitting around a table, talking animatedly about a scientific topic, asking questions, developing hypotheses, devising possible experiments to test these hypotheses. In this unit of study, we ask you to imagine the collaborative work of today’s scientists, the kind of work that goes on in the creative offices at Apple or Google or NASA, and to believe that such collaborative scientific work can occur in your classroom. You’ll group your readers around a topic, teaching them to study this topic with focus. You’ll help them develop a base of knowledge on this topic by reading (and talking) all about it, by adopting its “insider” language, by comparing and contrasting various texts on the topic. Once readers develop this base of knowledge, you’ll want to push further,

teaching them to question, hypothesize, experiment! We hope that in your classroom today, you'll sow seeds for the eureka's of tomorrow.

This unit is integrative—it connects reading, writing, and science. Your students will be reading about science in the reading workshop, writing about science in the writing workshop, and they'll be functioning like young scientists in the science workshop. Think about the unit, then, as linked to two sister units—one in the writing workshop (see that curricular plan discussion) and one in the science workshop. The unit is aligned with the Common Core State Standards for grade 2. The standards claim that by the end of second grade, students should be able to describe the connection between a series of scientific ideas—which is heady work for seven-year-olds! The Common Core State Standards also suggest that second grade is a perfect age for students to engage in shared research. This unit provides opportunities for that research.

The unit that we describe here could be adapted for use with any one of a variety of science units. We're writing the unit as if you will put forces and motion at the center of your science workshop, but you could choose a different topic. We recommend forces and motion because it has a nice elasticity that can allow a range of learners to become involved. It's broad enough to pertain to lots of different books, lots of different experiments, and yes, lots of different vehicles! If, for example, you elected instead to engage the whole class in a study of the life cycle of a butterfly, there might well be more accessible texts on that topic, but the subject is a narrow one for a whole-class monthlong inquiry. There are not as many subtopics or applications as there are in forces and motion. Although forces and motion is a great topic for a science study and a write-to-learn study, it is less ideal for a second-grade reading workshop. If you recall that students who are, for example, reading books at levels L and M should be reading almost a book a day, then provisioning your class with books for a monthlong inquiry on forces and motion would require you to provide twenty or so books on this topic for your readers of L/M books—and the truth is, you'd be lucky to have four, not twenty, such books. Granted, the truly resourceful teacher can use the public library as a source for books, can locate webinars on the subject, and so forth. Still, it is crucial that at the start of the study you take stock of your resources and your children's needs as readers and proceed accordingly.

In a science unit on forces and motion, children might pursue an essential question such as "What causes objects to move?" This question could motivate a lot of experimentation involving a mix of cars, trucks, balls, cubes, and inclined planes of all sorts. As we explain in the writing version of this unit, forces and motion has the advantage of being a topic that is conducive to experimentation. Second graders could speculate about the speed at which cars carrying loads of various sizes might roll down an inclined plane—and the young experimenters needn't wait long for data. During previous years, we suggested children study plants during this science/reading/writing unit, and that topic has the advantage of being one on which texts are easy to locate—but the child who believes that a plant will die away from the sun won't be able to collect data on the same day in which he posits his theory.

We recommend you collect a small text set of books on the topic you'll study—books that you can imagine reading aloud to the class. As you do this, be sure the books will support the instruction you want to give. If you want to teach the importance of headings and subheadings in nonfiction texts, be sure at least one of these books has those text features. (Remember that some books may address the topic tangentially. A book on cars, for example, could qualify as part of this unit!) When you've collected the relevant books, categorize them by both level of difficulty and by subtopic so that children can read several overlapping texts.

It is not easy to provide a class of second graders with enough texts on forces and motion to keep students "in books." There are a few ways you can proceed. First, you can track down more books on the topic and purchase them. You can visit our website ([www.readingandwritingproject.com](http://www.readingandwritingproject.com)) for some links to vendors such as Booksource, as well as websites such as [www.zoobooks.com](http://www.zoobooks.com) for suggested titles aligned with this topic of study as well as with your students' reading levels. Ideally, of course, you will sort your books by reading level and subtopic so that one basket might contain several M/N books on the same subtopic (forces of gravity, for example).

Even if you work hard to provide your students with books on this topic, chances are you won't have enough accessible books on forces and motion to sustain your students' reading lives throughout the unit. That is okay, because you can use forces and motion as your whole-class shared reading inquiry, and this whole-class work can support children in more independent inquiries they'll conduct on topics for which you *do* have texts. That is, if you do not have enough accessible books for all your students to read about forces and motion, you'll need to channel them to read about other topics. All is not lost—far from it—because your students can all explore the whole-class text set, work they can adapt when they read books on their subtopic. If the topics for your baskets comes from New York City's scope and sequence materials, these baskets would be labeled *Forces and Motion*, *Plant Diversity*, and *Earth Materials*. You might well decide to group books by your children's interests, in which case the bins or baskets might be labeled *Dinosaurs* or *Rocks*.

## Preparing for the Unit

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Preparing for any unit always involves collecting the texts that students will be reading and previewing them. In this unit, you'll need to collect the texts around the whole-class topic, which we are assuming is forces and motion, and you will also need to collect enough texts for kids to be kept "in books," which presumably means baskets of leveled books that cluster around other topics. It will be best if these other topics are ones that you have studied during the year, so children will be able to approach these books with some of the same intellectual support you are providing in their work with forces and motion. That is, children already know a lot about plants, so they can look at plant books and collect domain-specific works, then make a point of talking about the books and their ideas using those terms. This will be possible

because of the whole-class work you have presumably done earlier in the year about plants. Think about the other topics your class has studied and see whether you can also create text sets containing texts on those topics. Our descriptions of resources you might gather around the whole-class inquiry should help you as you gather similar resources around the small-group inquiry topics. Remember, too, that part of the fun of an investigation is that learners go out on a search, turning the world upside down in an effort to find ways to learn about a topic. Your children will be happy to join you in collecting books, brochures, diagrams, videos, clips of television shows, podcasts, and the like related to the topics they're studying.

The portion of this unit that is centered on a whole-class forces and motion inquiry and that supports the inquiry work children are doing during their science and writing workshops will probably include a sequence of read-aloud texts. You may or may not have enough books for kids to extend some of that learning with texts on the same topic that they can read on their own. This means that preparing for the unit will certainly require that you create a text set of read-aloud materials that can teach the big concepts and domain-specific vocabulary of your study. The class work with these books will also demonstrate to youngsters what readers do when we embark on studies of our own and will therefore support the small-group work they are doing using text sets on the same, a related, or a different topic. We think *Gravity Is a Mystery*, by Franklyn Branley, or *Forces Make Things Move*, by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, are good choices you might read aloud early in the unit, as is the poem "Gravity," by Londis Carpenter. Books such as *The Everything Kids' Science Experiments Book: Boil Ice, Float Water, Measure Gravity—Challenge the World Around You!*, by Tom Robinson, and many others like it, contain sections that relate to this topic. Once you collect your sources, try to organize them in such a way that you can show children that learners tend to read the more accessible books on a topic first, and then, as our background knowledge develops, we move on to more demanding texts. You may want your text set to include some videos as well.

You'll want to use the social structures within the classroom to facilitate the processes of questioning, wondering, and reading to learn. For many classrooms, especially those that launched reading clubs earlier in the year, this means that kids work together in two or three reading clubs, each club exploring one topic and sharing a basket of books. If you decide to set up book clubs, there are several logistical concerns you'll need to address. Will members of a club all read the same text? Will they compile a text set on one aspect or *feature* of the class' big topic to study in greater focus and detail? If your classroom library has enough titles to permit the latter option, it is certainly preferable. Imagine that your whole-class topic is forces and motion. Individual clubs might study gravity, air and water resistance, circular motion (gears and wheels), and friction, their members becoming "experts" on that subtopic.

You will probably also want to insert video clips into your read-alouds. The rock band OK Go's music video for the song "This Too Shall Pass" ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=qybUFnY7Y8w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qybUFnY7Y8w)) shows a Rube Goldberg machine

(familiar to those of us who played board games in the '80s and remember the game Mouse Trap). The video *How Things Move* can be added to your collection, as well as more academic videos, such as those on the website Brain Pop ([www.brainpop.com/science/motionsforcesandtime](http://www.brainpop.com/science/motionsforcesandtime)).

You could treat the videos as you might treat a read-aloud text. Just as you might tell readers that you read a bit of text and then stop to recall what you have read, adding it to whatever you already knew, you might tell video viewers that when you are learning about a topic, whether through reading or through watching, you first think about what you already know, then you learn some new stuff, then you think, “How does this connect to what I already knew?” You could illustrate by recruiting the children to join you in thinking about what you already know about a topic—say, *inertia*—watch a two-minute clip relevant to inertia, and then pause it and show kids that now you think, “What new things did I learn about inertia?” and then relate it to what you already knew.

Even a two-minute clip can provide an abundance of information, especially if you revisit it several times, showing children how much more they can get out of each successive encounter. Children can turn and talk, stop and draw, or pause to retell in the middle of a video, just as they can in the middle of a read-aloud. Some teachers find that it helps when replaying a familiar video to turn off the sound and ask partners to try to use domain-specific vocabulary as they talk about what they are seeing. All of this aligns with the Common Core State Standards, which call for the use of multimedia and for supporting content-specific vocabulary.

As you prepare for the unit, think about how you will help children become engaged with science vocabulary. Will you have a word wall for this express purpose? Key chains of word cards? A labeled mural that you and your students add to throughout the unit? Children will need many experiences seeing and using the new terms they learn—and of course, they’ll be using words and learning new words during writing workshop and science workshop, as well as during reading workshop.

As you start this final unit, bear in mind that this is your last chance to help readers move up through the levels of text difficulty. Although you no doubt feel you are ready to wind down your teaching, this is the month in which you are sending kids off to a summer of practice. Now is the perfect time to help students who are ready to break into another level of text difficulty. You know how to do this—give them transitional book baggies, provide text introductions, and set up same-book partnerships. Support some of the new vocabulary that readers will encounter. But your real job is probably motivational. Kids will be entering a new grade next year. With a final push, they can enter that grade reading at a higher level. Think about the texts that will become accessible to them as a result of this final push! You’ll absolutely want to do the book talks/book buzzes that create excitement around the newly accessible books, using the social energy of kids who’ve loved those books to energize this final push.



## Overview

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The sequence of work in this unit follows the logic that before they can ask collaborative questions on a topic (or do higher-level work such as develop hypotheses and devise experiments), children need a knowledge base. In the first part of the unit, therefore, you'll teach children to read all about their topic. This will mean reminding them of all the nonfiction comprehension strategies they learned earlier in the year, such as previewing texts, reading for main ideas, and using illustrations and other page elements to build up understanding. This also means teaching children to immerse themselves in domain-specific vocabulary so that they talk and think like "insiders." To build up their base of knowledge, you'll want children to read as many books on this topic as they can (or have access to).

In the second part of the unit, readers will compare and contrast the information they find in different books about the topic. You'll again reiterate some nonfiction teaching from earlier in the year: we can lay texts alongside one another to learn cumulatively from them, compare the illustrations in each, ponder conflicting information. But you'll add a new angle to children's compare-and-contrast work, telling them that this cross-textual work is essential to asking questions. You'll show children how to capture the undeveloped question that forms while they read, word it more fully, jot it down, bring it to club conversations, think deeper about it, and use it to spur other questions and theories.

By the end of the unit, young readers will have generated enough questions to pick one they may develop a theory, or hypothesis, about. "When science readers come up with a hypothesis," you'll teach, "we see if we can test it." A way to end the unit might be to nudge your "armchair scientists" to conduct a simple experiment to test a hypothesis developed as a result of their month's reading. If you worry that such experimentation isn't "reading" work and shouldn't be the concern of a reading teacher, think of the powerful message that will culminate this unit: reading forms the basis of new thinking that we can test. The small jump from library to lab can be one way to celebrate that reading spills out of books to guide actual thought and action.

## Part One: Science Readers Build Up a Base of Knowledge on a Topic by Reading Deeply about the Topic

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Here, you'll be emphasizing strategies for reading to learn. Teach children to choose the easier texts first, to build background knowledge. Then they can use this knowledge to approach the next level of text. Dick Allington shows *that readers will teach themselves to read nonfiction* if they find the subject fascinating and if they have access to texts they can actually read. Within their clubs, readers will each begin a book on a shared topic—this is the start of a monthlong collaborative scholarship and exploration of a topic.

As a way to start them off on the very first book on a topic they will follow for the rest of the month, you might teach children that science readers deliberate over the cover blurb and table of contents, study the organization of the book, and examine the details of illustrations and their accompanying captions to learn *all we can* about the book's topic. You'll want to model that learners use more than the written text to learn about a subject and that learning involves active curiosity about *all* book features. Remind readers to note that some words are written in bold print, while others are in italics, that some portions on a page contain all-about or informational writing, while the sidebar on the *same page* zeros in on a small feature of that page's topic. Teach children to preview texts to gain control over the content a book offers. Readers will want to ask themselves, "What big things will this text teach me?" and "What are some smaller parts that the book is divided into?" and survey the headings and the subheadings.

Soon after this, you will want to teach ways for clubs to build conversations based on the work that individual members are beginning to do. Sentence starters are helpful scaffolds to force children's hand in the practice of a skill. In this case, you'll want to provide sentence starters that will help readers share headings and subheadings with other club members:

- "The topic of this page is \_\_\_\_\_, since it says that right in the heading. But as I read on, what I realize is that this section is really mostly about \_\_\_\_\_."
- "The heading on this page says \_\_\_\_\_. When I turn that into a sentence, I would say that this page is mostly about \_\_\_\_\_."
- "When I read the facts on this page and look back at the heading, I realize that a different way to say the heading could be \_\_\_\_\_."
- "The heading says \_\_\_\_\_. As I read the words and look at the pictures/diagrams/captions and put all the information together, I realize it's really mostly about \_\_\_\_\_."

Often in the books children are reading, a page will present a main idea and a few facts that develop the main idea. You can teach children to chunk the text by using subheadings (if there are any) or section headings. At the end of each chunk, we can cover the text and say, "This part teaches me \_\_\_\_\_," and then, "It teaches me by giving examples or evidence such as \_\_\_\_\_." One word of caution—you'll want to peruse the books your children are reading to be sure that they mostly have headings. If not, save this instruction for either small-group work or mid-workshop teaching point, and instead teach your children a strategy more appropriate for the format of their books. For example, if you notice that most books are all about one

topic, like Jennifer Dussling's *Bugs! Bugs! Bugs!*, but switch subtopics halfway through—she goes from talking about how bugs can be predators who eat other bugs to writing about how bugs protect their young—you might want to alert them that an author's approach to a topic may shift about halfway through the book. If you happen to have a lot of question-and-answer books, you can let your children know that the question is like a subheading, and they can read the facts that follow the question to see how it is answered. In doing this, you're addressing the Common Core State Standard that expects second graders to "describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text." This teaching pertains to the first strand, which asks learners to determine the "key ideas and details" of a text. This overarching goal has been addressed in previous nonfiction units this year. Therefore, you'll want to up the ante and align your expectations with the increasing challenges your children will face now that they are reading harder books. The benchmark levels are now levels L/M, though you may have a range of readers at levels J through N. Allow the actual levels in your class and the text difficulties within those levels to inform the kinds of strategies you teach to achieve this goal. Begin this part by pulling out the strategies chart you began in December and added to in March.

Next, you'll want to broaden your children's vocabulary relative to the topic. You might tell them that while talking about a topic, scientists use "science words." After all, how many scientists talk about what they know by using words like *thing* and *stuff* and *you know*? You want to teach even your youngest scientists to use the words of experts—to learn those words from their reading and to use those words in their writing and speaking about their topic. You can teach them ways to collect these words; encourage them to discuss and use the words in their reading club conversations; and ask them to have the words ready during writing workshop as they write about their topic. This aligns to the Common Core State Standard that says students will "determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 2 topic or subject area."

When handling unfamiliar vocabulary, you'll want to balance instruction around *decoding* strategies—how to read the unknown word—as well as *meaning* strategies—how to understand the word. Again, some of the vocabulary instruction will reiterate strategies of the past. You may, for example, remind readers that they know to hold on to the overall meaning of the text by substituting the hard word with a synonym and then reading on. You might also remind readers of decoding strategies you've introduced in other units of study, such as breaking up the word into its parts and trying to figure out what the word might mean. Since authors of expository texts often use technical or content-specific words a casual reader isn't likely to know, it's important to have strategies to persevere and attempt to figure those words out.

Following this, you'll want to teach club members to use domain-specific vocabulary in their conversations about their topic. Understanding domain-specific words is often integral to understanding content. When these words appear in the text, the author often will define the word outright and explicitly in a marginal glossary feature or in the glossary in the back of the book. Other times, the word the author

wants us to learn is illustrated or pictured on the same page. You'll want to teach children to look to the text features on the page for support in understanding what a domain-specific word might mean. For example, an illustration that accompanies text introducing levers to a reader will likely have a visual representation of what levers look like. Children need explicit instruction to learn to "read" illustrative portions of the text (e.g., photographs, quotes, timelines, charts, and maps) carefully. For second-grade nonfiction readers, it's helpful to teach concrete ways to notice where in the context of the word the definition is likely to appear. Many nonfiction writers of nonfiction texts leveled J/K/L/M will define the word explicitly in a nearby sentence. Consider the following lines from *How Do You Lift a Lion?*, by Robert E. Wells:

Sometimes an **axle** will support one wheel, as on a wheelbarrow, or two wheels, as on a wagon. An **axle** is a supporting rod or bar on which the wheel moves.

As you may have noticed, the new word is repeated in the second sentence and a definition provided: "\_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_." Another common way that authors define words within the same sentence in which the word appears is with parentheses or commas: "When a lever moves it **pivots** (turns) on the fulcrum." Other times, the definition will come in a sentence *before* the word:

One way to lift a heavy object is to use a lifting device which uses a wheel with a groove around it to hold a rope. This is called a **pulley**.

As in the above example, the new word will often be preceded by the phrase *this is called*.

Even when the text makes overt efforts, in context or in text features, to give young readers direct access to unfamiliar vocabulary, children will often resist adopting the new words they see in print. Technical vocabulary, with its infrequent real-world usage, unconventional spelling, and vague pronunciation, is not the most easy or natural for children to incorporate into their own language. This makes it doubly important that you teach club members to hold each other accountable for using the "science language" for their topic wherever possible.

## Part Two: Science Readers Compare and Contrast Different Texts on the Same Topic

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It won't be long before club members finish the first and easiest of their topic books and reach in the bin for a second. You'll want to respond to this shift into a second text by showing children that this second reading will rest on the shoulders of the first. "When we read a second book on a topic," you'll teach, "we bring all we know from the first book and think, 'How is the information in this new book the same or different from the first book?' And when we begin the third book on this topic, we'll do the

same thing—we'll bring all we know from the first two books to this third reading." Remind children that they can place books side by side and compare illustrations. For example, the diagram of a lever and fulcrum in one text might be supplemented by the diagram of a man lifting a stone with a lever in a second book and perhaps by a picture of a seesaw in a third text. You'll want to remind children also to read cumulatively, adding all they find out from the successive books to extend whatever they read in the first. Again, this isn't new work, children have compared and contrasted the information contained in multiple texts in the previous two nonfiction reading units this year (refer to and revisit the teaching points on comparing and contrasting texts from Units Four and Six if you feel the need). But to keep this work spiraling upward, you'll want to teach new, increasingly sophisticated ways of comparing and contrasting texts on a topic.

Early in this part, you will coach into the ways that clubs facilitate readers' responses to texts. Set up a practice where, during the course of his or her independent reading, each child jots at least two or three responses to the text (perhaps on Post-its, as a way to keep them brief) and brings these back to club members to share. Jotting a thought and then articulating and defending it in front of an audience of peers is a big step for youngsters. Do make sure that you stop often in your read-alouds to respond to whatever you're reading. You might also devote a minilesson to demonstrating how a reader might capture a thought in writing and later bring it to a discussion. You may want to provide a list of thought prompts that make it easier for students to get started structuring a response to text: "This makes me wonder \_\_\_\_\_." "Why is it that \_\_\_\_\_?" "It says here that \_\_\_\_\_ so that must mean \_\_\_\_\_." You might list these thought prompts (and others you devise) on a chart placed conspicuously in the room for club members to view as they jot notes while reading and talking among themselves.

If your children have been writing worthwhile Post-its all along, they can use those Post-its to do some of this compare/contrast work. Worthwhile Post-its for this work would be ones that don't contain random factoids but rather are about the main ideas that the author is trying to put forth; that ask deep and meaningful questions that reflect the reading of a section, not just a sentence; and that grapple with the major concepts and use the vocabulary to speak about that concept. You may launch this work by reexamining some of the jumbo Post-its that you wrote during one of your read-alouds. As a class, you could take your Post-its and plaster them on the Smart Board or on an easel for the whole class to see. You can ask them to sort them into piles, thinking, "Which of these Post-its talk about the same topic?" Maybe all the Post-its about gravity would go together, and all the main ideas and thoughts about sinking would go in another pile. You might say, "In this book we read aloud, we learned about gravity and the concept of sinking and floating. Let's think about these two parts and how they relate to the bigger topic of force. What's the same about gravity and sinking? What's different? Turn and talk with your partner." You can then ask your children to take the Post-its related to one of the books they read out of their folder and lay them on the table in front of them. Have them look through them and

determine which ones seem to “go together” because they are about the same topic or a similar topic. For example, children might put all the Post-its that have to do with pulleys in one pile and all the Post-its that have to do with ramps in another. They could then look within piles and across piles to compare and contrast. Now that they’ve had some practice with this concept, you can launch their reading for the day with the advice, “Write Post-its that will help you do this work with your partner.”

As children read on in their books, they should also be accumulating the text and thinking in a synthesizing, comparing/contrasting way as they read. If they’ve already read a part about pulleys, seen pictures of pulleys, and thought about real-life applications of pulleys, then when they go on to a section about wheels they should make some connections. “Oh! A pulley is basically just a wheel. But these wheels move on an axle. A pulley is moved by the rope or chains going around it. They both need some force to make them move—a person to pull the rope and a person to push the cart, or an engine to power them.” By doing this more deliberate compare-and-contrast work with the Post-its from their books, they’re developing a mindset that will allow them (with some reminding) to read this way.

You’ll also want to make the most of the fact that alongside this reading unit, your students are studying the content in science workshop. They can and should think about what they’re learning in science and compare and contrast it with what they’re learning in their books. If they worked with a small pulley and piece of kitchen twine in science and then see a picture of a large piece of construction equipment with a pulley in one of their books, they should be able to talk about what’s similar about the two (they are both wheels with some kind of rope/string around them; they both help to lift something heavy; one was powered by a person, the other is powered by an engine; one is small, one is big; etc.).

As always, sentence starters and thought prompts help push kids to talk in ways that practice the skill. When reading clubs meet, you may want to teach children some ways to discuss the similarities and differences in the parts they’re noticing. You’ll want to bring out old charts, particularly the one that lists thought prompts to use in club conversations while comparing and contrasting texts, adding a few new ones:

- “In science we \_\_\_\_\_, and in this book I’m noticing \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “In this part it says \_\_\_\_\_, but here it says \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “This reminds me of something else I read.”
- “This is different from that because \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “These are kind of the same and kind of different.”



Next, teach children to look across books, at parts of each book, or at whole books. You might teach them, for example, to read what one author has to say about pulleys and then read a different author's explanation. They can talk about what each author helped them know and understand. They can also look at a whole book and think about what one author thought was important about force and motion and then see what another author thought was important to include. They can ask themselves, "What does each author want me to understand about the whole topic?"

### Part Three: We Learn by Asking Questions

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In the first two parts of the unit, children devoted their time to developing a knowledge base about their topic. Now that they know enough about this topic (having read a number of books on it and compared and contrasted the information within these books), you can introduce them to bigger, deeper work on this topic. You'll teach your readers to apply the scientific method: to ask a question, formulate a hypothesis, and design an experiment.

*How do chickens sit on eggs without crushing them? Why can I see through glass? How can flies always tell when you're just about to swat them?* These are the kinds of questions that second graders, with their natural curiosity about the world, ask. Children are halfway to being scientists if they look around them with wide-open eyes to form questions about the universe. Thoughtful schooling not only preserves this habit of mind—of asking questions about the universe—it teaches children to approach these questions in systematic ways. The Common Core State Standards call it "asking and answering questions such as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text." In the next few days, you'll be telling your youngsters, "Readers make observations, ask questions, voice disagreements, or make additions to what we read." This is exciting work. It has the potential to make children feel more in control not only of their reading but also of their learning. When youngsters jot all the little thoughts and questions that the text inspires into the margin or on a Post-it, they are in fact bringing their own schema into play, actively coauthoring the text. This is a great unit to be focusing on this use of schema in their reading, as your science workshop unit will be in full force alongside this reading work. Children should have much to discuss when using their knowledge together with the information their book is teaching them.

You may want to begin by teaching children that science readers can jote quick notes on Post-its about questions that occur to us as we read. Thinking about what we already know about the topic, we consider what might make sense and predict/hypothesize about the answer. Our Post-it might say, "I wonder \_\_\_\_\_, and I'll bet it's \_\_\_\_\_." Or we may prefer to read through the whole page/chapter once and then reread it before jotting down our thinking. Either way, we bring these quick jots to our clubs to talk and think some more about them together.

Since clubs are reading from a text set, you can expect that they'll do some work putting these books together to ask questions. You can teach them that scientists read

across a few books to formulate a question. Teach them that science readers think about how the information from one text helps us understand information from another text more deeply, and then we ask a question about what we still want to know. You could also explain that science readers question when information from two different texts doesn't add up. If your second graders are particularly advanced, you might even teach them that readers are on the lookout for contradictions and wonder about the author's slant or perspective on a topic.

Teaching club members to formulate questions based on the text and then bring these to their club conversations can be the first step in developing collaborative inquiry on a shared topic. Ask club members to record their collective queries on the topic on a chart or "question board." As a next step, you might also ask them to add a second column, headed *Hypothesis*. For second graders, this new word might be a mouthful, so you'll want to explain carefully. "Till now, you've been asking questions, and I see these questions up on your question boards. They are smart questions too, the kind that scientists ask. Now I want to teach you the *next* thing scientists do after asking questions such as these. *Next*, scientists take our questions and turn them over in our mind, talk to club members about them, and together we come up with a possible answer. This possible answer is called a *hypothesis*." Teach children to begin a hypothesis with prompts that establish their probable, unconfirmed status:

- "Perhaps \_\_\_\_\_."
- "It could be that \_\_\_\_\_."
- "Maybe this is because \_\_\_\_\_."
- "This may occur because \_\_\_\_\_."
- "It might be possible that \_\_\_\_\_."

Recognizing and forming hypotheses is one more aspect of overall literacy, and you want to introduce children to this skill as early as possible. Second graders' hypotheses will, obviously, lack the formal, testable premise that can be expected in higher grades. For now, it is enough to teach children that hypotheses are scientists' way of thinking up possible answers to questions, that these hypotheses may or may not be true, that only experiments can confirm their validity.

You will want to model developing a hypothesis by replicating the twin columns on clubs' question boards. In the first column, you might write a question—possibly picking up a question you've noted one of the clubs asking, for example: "My friend and I weigh the same so shouldn't we balance on a seesaw?" or "Why does the playground seesaw always tip over on one or the other side?" You'll want to ponder the answer dramatically, scratching your head, holding your chin and saying, "Maybe \_\_\_\_\_." You want children to note that a hypothesis is a guess that needs to be tested to be

proven, *not* the “correct answer” to the question. To fill out the second column, you might ask your readers to call out possible answers: “It could be that the two friends are not exactly the same weight, because one is wearing heavier boots and jacket,” or “It may be possible that one friend doesn’t know that her weight has increased/decreased since she last weighed herself.” You might supply a possible answer of your own: “Maybe this is because the seesaw’s pivot or fulcrum isn’t exactly in the center.”

Next, you’ll want to make clear to children that developing hypotheses is the work of a science reader. “A hypothesis is not just any old guess,” you’ll teach. “It is an *informed* guess. That means the person making this guess must really know the topic, that the guess is based on some sensible understanding of how this topic works. To come up with a good hypothesis, we often have to go back to the books on our topic and figure out possible answers!” Encourage lots of questions and hypotheses, no matter how rudimentary or undeveloped they are. Remember, you’re sowing the seeds for scientific and inquiry-based thinking, *not* helping children solve the secrets of the world. Teaching habits of mind is enough at this stage. There are, however, plenty of small teachable points to watch out for. For example, you’ll want to remind children that the hypothesis must be phrased as a statement, not another question, and to use words such as *might* or *may* or *perhaps*. Similarly, during club conferences, you’ll want to ask children to cite or show you the specific parts of texts that helped them develop a particular hypothesis. Also, you’ll want to push children into reading and rereading to develop more questions and corresponding hypotheses. You’ll watch for clubs that are filling their question boards with plenty of questions and hypotheses, praising and guiding their efforts.

Depending on how your second graders respond to this instruction, you might very well decide to end the unit here, asking clubs to present their question boards to one another or to an external audience, such as a neighboring class or to parents. Club members may explain the process they undertook to reach certain hypotheses. If clubs have dealt in detail with subtopics branching out from a larger, whole-class topic, it will make sense to look anew at the topic as a whole class, each club sharing their specialized information. The clubs could even present the information to another class.

Another possible celebration of this month’s work—particularly if your readers have shown aptitude for this—could be to take the scientific method one step further, teaching children to return to all the hypotheses they’ve written and think up ways they might be tested through an experiment. To do this, you might team up with the science teacher. “This month, we’ve been armchair scientists,” you might say, “because researching and coming up with hypotheses is a great first step for scientists. But once we have a string of hypotheses to look at, we can ask, ‘Can I prove whether this hypothesis is right or wrong? What experiment might I need to conduct? What materials would I need for this experiment? What possible steps would this experiment include?’ ” You’ll want to scaffold this big work for your scientists—perhaps by looking across each club’s hypotheses and facilitating their efforts to pick one that is easiest to test. You might recruit help from the science teacher and lab teacher and help children set up simple experiments. In the end, more than the beauty of particular experiments,

the fact worth celebrating is that children's reading has paved the way for questioning, hypothesizing, and experimenting—that scientists are readers!

Since this unit ends around the same time as your unit in science and your unit in writing, you may consider having some kind of science fair where children can display their understanding through demonstration, writing, and speaking about their topic. You may have an area where children can replicate the experiments and activities they did in science for an audience. They may show people the writing they did. They may coach their audience to follow the procedures they wrote about in their writing by supplying the materials they have mentioned in their work.

## Word Study

During these last months of the year, you will probably do much of your word study in small groups to allow children to practice phonics concepts you've taught thus far. *Phonics Lessons, Grade 2*, by Pinnell and Fountas, provides instruments you can use to assess what you've taught up to this point. Based on these assessments, you might find you need to review concepts that are necessary for children to be prepared to begin third grade. You also want to review the Common Core State Standards for skills students should have by the end of second grade. For about twenty minutes, twice a week, you can have children work in small groups set up for phonics and word study practice based on your assessments.

As the year comes to a close, you'll probably look at your students' writing to see that they spell word wall words conventionally and fluently (are able to write them quickly) and that their attempts to spell unknown words are grounded in all they know about how words work. You'll want to see that they transferred what they learned in word study to their writing and to their reading.

To support your word study curriculum, below are a few suggested lessons, based on features of spelling in which many second graders tend to need explicit instruction:

<b>If you decide to teach . . .</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Words Their Way</i>, 4th edition</b>	<b>Suggested lessons in <i>Phonics Lessons, Grade 2</i> (Pinnell &amp; Fountas)</b>
Contractions		WS10 to WS12 (pp. 339–350)
Inflectional endings for plural and past tense	See Adaptable Games (p. 220) 7-2 (p. 221)	WS5, WS6 (pp. 319–326) WS9 (pp. 335–338)
Homophones	6-16, 6-17 (pp. 199–200)	WM4 to WM5 (pp. 285–292)
Prefixes and suffixes	See Adaptable Games (p. 220) 7-9 (pp. 226–227)	WS13 to WS18 (pp. 351–374) WS21 to WS22 (pp. 383–390)
High-frequency words	pp. 182–183	HF1 to HF9 (pp. 235–270)

## One Possible Sequence of Teaching Points

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In this unit your students will live like scientists. They will observe, question, and research content together during science and writing workshops. They will be discovering things around them and writing to teach others what they are learning. In reading workshop they will be reading about their science themes. Your second-grade readers will be reading at level M. This is your last unit of the year—your last chance to push them as readers. Make sure a high volume of reading is going on in the classroom. If your kids are reading well below benchmark, you might turn to an earlier nonfiction reading unit (Unit Four or Six) or the first-grade curriculum calendar (Unit Eight) to find ways of teaching comprehension skills in lower-level texts. Be sure to continue using running records, spelling inventories, high-frequency word lists, and conference notes to determine what exactly your readers need. If you find that many of your students need a substantial amount of work on word solving, you will want to work on these skills in this unit as well. If your data show that students are reading at much higher levels than the benchmark, you might decide to turn to a nonfiction unit in the third-grade curriculum calendar to see how you might add teaching points that are more sophisticated.

As you approach this unit, it will be important for you to read the preceding discussion, not just the teaching points below, because children learn through the work they do; the prior discussion is filled with ideas, activities, and teaching to help you organize and create opportunities for children to engage in work that matters. It can help you issue the generous invitation that rallies kids not only to work with heart and soul but also to engage in deliberate practice, trying to get better at specific skills that the unit aims to highlight.

In the end, a good portion of your teaching will revolve around the responsive instruction you provide as you move kids along trajectories of skill development. This part of your teaching relies on your assessing your students often—not in big fancy ways but by watching the work they do—and on your seeing their work as feedback on your teaching. If you have taught something and only a handful of kids are able to sustain that work to good effect, then you'll want to decide whether that skill is essential, whether you want to reteach it in a new way, whether you want to detour around it. You'll want to become accustomed to fine-tuning your teaching through an attentiveness to student work, because the work your students do not only shows you what they can or can't do, it also shows you what *you* can do.

## Part One: Science Readers Build Up a Base of Knowledge on a Topic by Reading Deeply about the Topic

- “Today I want to teach you that readers can look at a nonfiction book in parts. The whole book is about a big, watermelon topic, but each section is like one seed of that watermelon.”
- “Today I want to remind you that one way that science readers push ourselves to understand our reading well is to know it well enough to be able to explain it to others. One way that we can do this is to say what we’ve read in our own words to make our learning stick. After reading a chunk, we might put the book down and think to ourselves or say to our partner, ‘What this means is \_\_\_\_\_.’”
- “Today I want to remind you that science readers can think and talk about the main ideas in our books. One way readers can prepare to come ready to discuss the information and ideas that we learned is to be thinking about the main ideas in each part of our books.”
  - ▶ *Tip:* “Readers of nonfiction texts use all the sentences on the page to think about what’s most important—the big, main idea of that section. We often say our main idea not just as a word but instead as a phrase.”
  - ▶ *Mid-workshop teaching point:* “As readers we can chunk the text using the sub-headings or section headings. At the end of each chunk, we can cover the text and say (or write on a Post-it), ‘This part teaches me \_\_\_\_\_,’ and then, ‘It teaches me by giving examples or evidence such as \_\_\_\_\_.’”
  - ▶ *Teaching share:* “After readers determine the main idea of a small section, we want to think about the main idea of bigger parts. As we read, we want to notice whether the next paragraph builds on the same idea or maybe starts another new idea. We want to mark parts where the idea is changing with a Post-it, and when we are done reading the whole chapter think, ‘This whole text is mostly about \_\_\_\_\_.’”
- “Readers of nonfiction remember and use all we know about the topic when we are reading. Today I want to teach you that as scientists are studying, reading, and thinking about the main ideas in our books, we will also want to bring all we know about our topic to our reading. We can recall our experiments, activities, explorations, and learning from science and writing workshops to help us explain and think about what we are learning during reading workshop.”
- “Today I want to remind you that science readers build up our background knowledge quickly by starting with the books that feel like easy reads, the ones that can give us a quick and big overview of our topic. As we read, we orient



ourselves to a new topic and quickly gain knowledge by skimming and scanning across all of the features of the page—not just text but also the photographs, maps, timelines, diagrams, charts, captions, and sidebars. Reading across the different features, we try to name the big concepts and say or jot, “The big idea in this section is \_\_\_\_\_, and this timeline and this photograph show \_\_\_\_\_.”

- “As scientists read, we keep in mind that we will be able to work with a partner to support and push our learning. Today I want to teach you that when you come together with a partner or a club to talk, you not only need to come prepared for your discussion with important information and key ideas, you should also plan to help your partners figure out what is important as well.”
  - *Tip:* “We anticipate that we can help one another figure out and hold on to the most important ideas and details by pausing in our reading and retelling the information. We might say, ‘The big thing that I just learned from this chapter is \_\_\_\_\_, and some of the most fascinating details about this are \_\_\_\_\_.’”
  - *Tip:* “We also ask one another questions like: ‘Why is that important?’ ‘How is that important to our topic?’ ‘Is that the most important thing in that part/section?’”
- “Today I want to remind you that readers of nonfiction collect and use the words that we learn when teaching and talking about our topic. We can do this by placing Post-its in places where we learn a new word and writing down what we think the word means, or we can keep a running list.”
  - *Tip:* “You will want to have these words with you as you are reading and talking with your partners and clubs.”

## **Part Two: Science Readers Compare and Contrast Different Texts on the Same Topic**

- “Today I want to teach you that readers of nonfiction carry all that we have learned from one book with us as we move to another book. One way that we do this is to look out for what sounds the same and also for what is different when it comes to the information we are learning.”
  - *Tip:* “Come to partnerships or clubs ready to discuss what is the same and different.”
- “Readers capture our responses to texts on Post-its and discuss these responses in our book clubs. Today I want to remind you that we also defend our

responses. One way that we can do this is to point to and cite the page or parts of a text that caused us to respond in the way that we did.”

- ▶ *Tip:* “You many even need to read a section aloud. Your club mates should be listening for whether the idea matches the evidence.”

- ▶ *Tip:* “Then we help one another further by trying to talk long about the idea. We may even open our text to a similar section.”

- “Today I want to teach you that readers come well prepared to our clubs. One thing that we can do is to make sure that we bring clear ideas to talk about. Oftentimes, readers look across our Post-its for topics that go together. Then we look within a same-topic pile of Post-its for information that is the same. We also think about whether we can find differences among the Post-its.”

- ▶ *Tip:* “In our clubs we are ready to explain these differences as well.”

- ▶ *Mid-workshop teaching point:* “Science readers can think about our books and the information we know from our experiences, experiments, and discussions during science workshop to help think about what is the same and what is different.”

- “Today I want to teach you that readers discover similarities and differences in information by looking across texts, at parts of texts, or at whole texts. Each of these different ways of looking at information in a text helps us figure out what an author wants us to learn most. One way to do this is to zoom in on parts of texts that talk about a similar topic, thinking about parts of the text that are similar and parts that are different.”

- “Today I want to teach you that researchers note when information from two different texts doesn’t add up and we question this. One way we do this is by being on the lookout for contradictions and wondering what the author really wants us to think about the topic.”

- ▶ *Tip:* “We bring these contradictions to our partnership conversations as ways to spark good talk.”

### **Part Three: We Learn by Asking Questions**

- “As we read, scientists often hold our questions and thoughts by jotting them down. Today I want to teach how we can do this. One thing that we can do is to jot quick notes on Post-its about questions that occur to us as we read. Thinking about what we already know about the topic, we consider what might make sense and predict/hypothesize about the answers.”



- *Tip:* “What we have done is lift a fact from our reading and made a connection with our science topic that we are studying.”
- *Tip:* “We can test the ideas we are thinking about using not only examples in the text but also things we see and know from our life experiences. For example, someone might say, ‘I learned that going up a ramp takes more force and going down a ramp takes less. I wonder if that’s why I see trucks unload their boxes into the basement of the bodega by a ramp? It makes their work easier.’”

## ADDITIONAL WRITING RESOURCES BY

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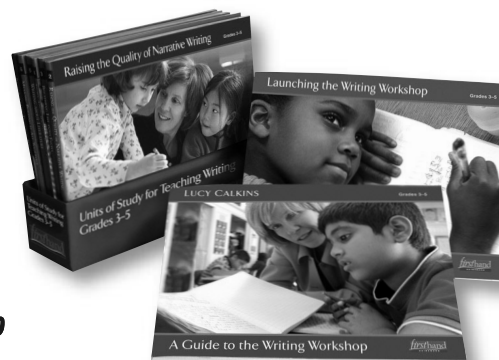
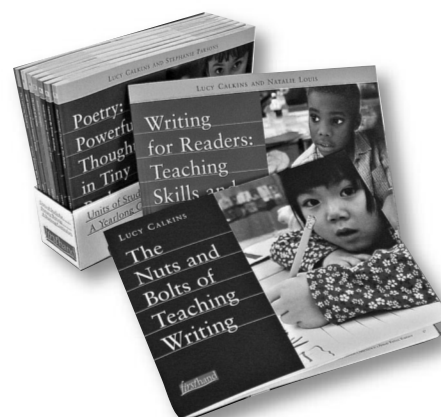
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